

THREE CHUMS

A WEEKLY STORY OF THE ADVENTURES OF TWO BOYS AND A GIRL.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

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THREE CHUMS IN ITALY OR DOING AS THE ROMANS DO. BY HARRY MOORE.



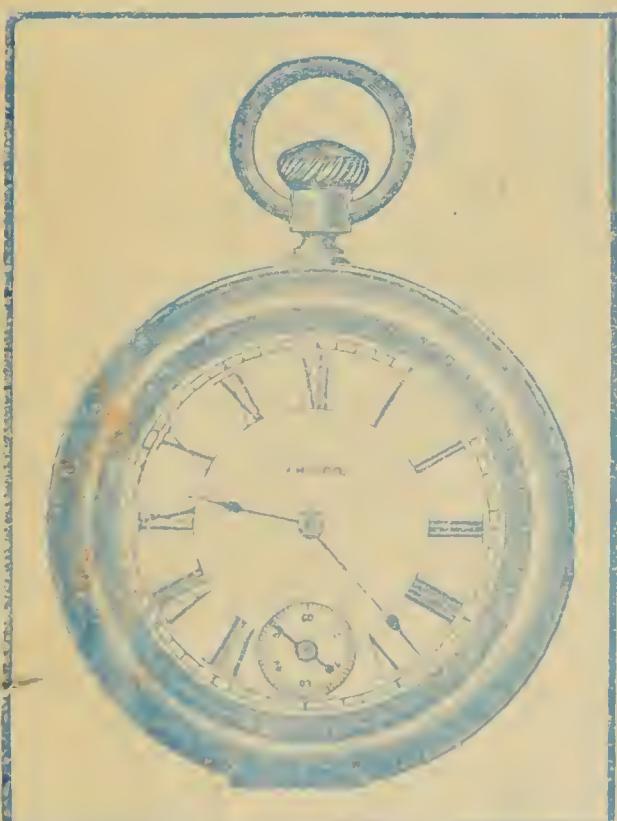
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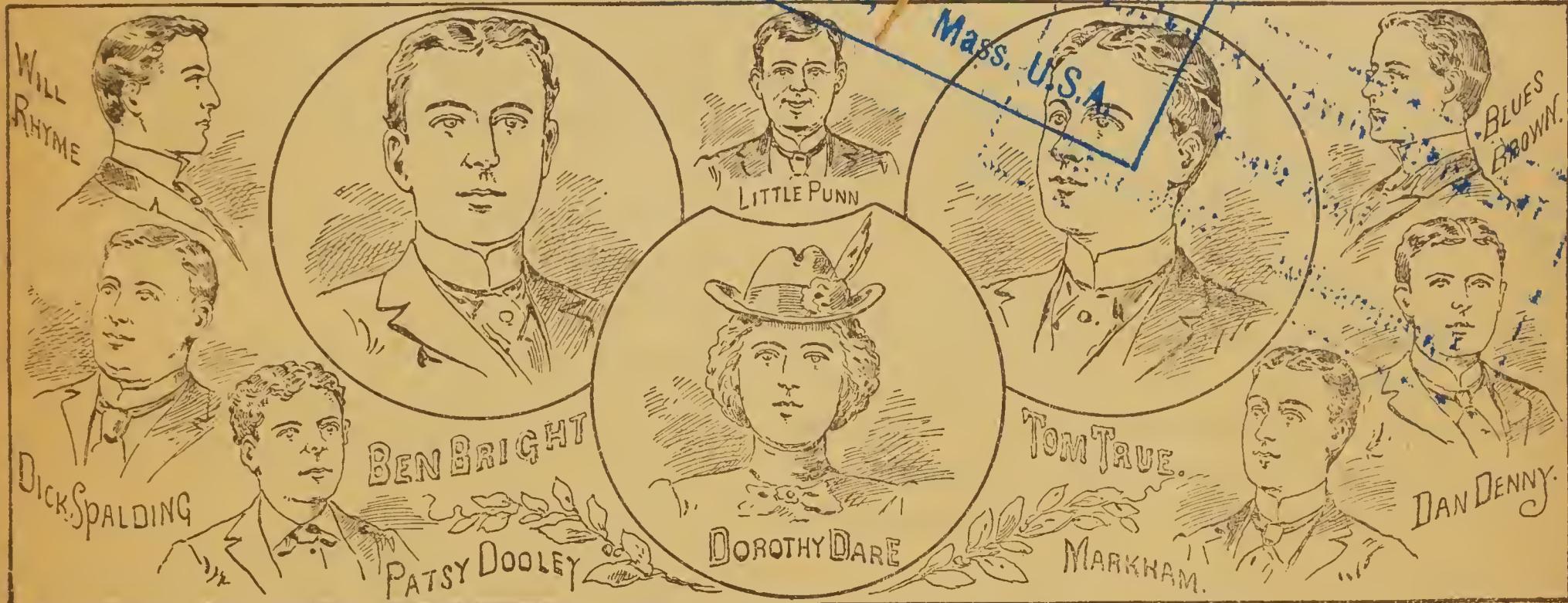
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CHAPTER I.

BOUND FOR SUNNY ITALY.

Blues Brown, a tall, slender, solemn-looking youth of perhaps eighteen years; "he said dead ahead."

"Oh, he did?"

"Yes; he means that the land he saw lies dead ahead—in other words, straight ahead."

"Oh, is that so?"

"It is."

"All right; you think you know a whole lot, don't you, Brownie? Well, I can tell you one thing, and that is this: that if you are not careful, and get too smart around me, you will become 'dead ahead' of your time!"

"Bah!"

"I wonder what land it can be?" remarked Dorothy Dare.

"Land ho!"

"Whereaway?"

"Dead ahead!"

"Where is the deadhead, Ben? I didn't know they had deadhead out on the ocean! Let me see him! I want to see what he looks like," this from a little, funny-looking chap of about sixteen years.

"He didn't say 'deadhead,' you blockhead!" growled

a beautiful girl of about seventeen years. "What land is there in this part of the ocean, Ben?" turning to a handsome, manly-looking youth of about eighteen years, who stood near.

"I am not sure, Dorothy, but I think it must be the Bermudas," the youth replied. "The captain said we would sight them to-day."

"The Bermudas!" exclaimed Mamie Blair; "oh, are we going to stop there, Ben? I wish we would! I have read and heard so much about the Bermudas that I would like to see them."

"And so should I," said Mildred Shepard.

Mamie and Mildred were about the same age as Dorothy, and both were very beautiful girls, each being of a different type of beauty, however, from Dorothy, and from each other.

The scene is the deck of a beautiful steam yacht, where a little party of young people, consisting of ten youths and three maidens, are gathered, looking ahead over the bow in the direction in which the land would be seen before long, but which was not yet visible from the deck, the lookout having seen it from the masthead, with the aid of a glass.

This party is the around-the-world party of Ben Bright and his friends—in fact, it is the twice-around-the-world party, for it had been around the world once, having visited South America, Egypt, Africa and China. While en route from Pekin, China to Yokohama, Japan, however, the yacht on which they were had sprung a leak—it having been badly wrenched in a storm—and had sunk in the Corea Channel. They had escaped in boats to one of the groups of Goto Islands, however, and had succeeded in reaching Nagasaki, Japan, in the boats, and from there had gone to Yokohama in a steamer, and from there to San Francisco, and thence to New York. As their trip had been suddenly interrupted, and they had been forced to return to New York sooner than they had wished to do so, Ben and his friends decided that they would make another trip around the world, and finish what they had begun, but had been forced to abandon temporarily. To this end they had leased another yacht—the one they were now on—and had started on another trip around the world, with the intention of seeing other countries that they had wished to visit the first time going around. They had sailed, first, to Cuba, as a number—all of them, in fact—had wished to see the island, and they were now headed eastward, and were bound for Italy, the land of sunshine. Land had just been seen, and it was thought to be the group of islands known as the Bermudas.

"What is there interesting about the Bermudas, Mamie?" asked Little Punn, who always wished to know everything.

"Oh, there is nothing of great interest, that I know of, Little Punn. I know that these islands are becoming popular as winter resorts, however, and a great many wealthy people of New York spend three or four months here each year."

"I shall have to do so hereafter, then; for you know I am one of the wealthy men of New York!"

"If you'd pay all you owe, you wouldn't be very wealthy!" sneered Brown, who was always picking at the little chap, though the two were in reality the best of friends.

"As ever, thinking of yourself and talking of me!" grinned Little Punn. "If you were to pay all you owe, you would still owe a lot."

"How could that be, Punny?" asked Rhyme.

"Why you see, he'd have to borrow money if he were to pay all he owes, and that would leave him still in debt, see? That's a paradox."

"And you two are a pair of chattering idiots!" drawled Dick Spalding, a regular giant of a fellow, as strong as Hercules, and as good natured as one could be.

"Now will you fellows be good?" said Heber Markham, a tall, dark-faced, dark-eyed, but handsome youth.

"Oh, I'm always good," said Little Punn. "I have always been a good little boy—but Brownie, there, was always absolutely incorrigible. His folks gave him up as a hopeless youngster long ago, and the last time I was there, they begged me to watch over him and try to make a halfway respectable fellow out of him, if I could. I promised, but it is an uphill task, I tell you! He doesn't seem to improve very fast."

"Oh, you make me sick!" growled Brown: "my folks never told you any such thing; the truth of the matter is that my parents warned me against associating with Little Punn, but I told them that I thought that perhaps I might do him good, and make a better boy of him if I gave him the advantage of my company, and they said all right; for me to go ahead."

"Hear him trying to steal my thunder?" grinned Little Punn. "Why don't you do something original, Brownie?"

"There! I see land now!" said Ben Bright, pointing. "See, girls; right over the bow."

"Ah, yes; I see it," said Dorothy; "it looks just like a cloud in the distance."

"Yes, but it is land."

"By the way, did you say you were going to stop there, Ben?" asked Markham.

"Yes; we will put in at Hamilton, on Main Island, and stay a day or two. Then we can run across to St. George's Island, if we choose, and to Ireland Island, where there is a floating dock, the only one, I think, that there is in the world. It was made in England, in 1869, and was towed to the island."

"What an odd way to get a dock," laughed Mamie.

"It must be a pretty big raft, eh, Ben?" from Little Punn.

"Yes; it is, I think, one hundred and twenty-four feet wide by three hundred and eighty-one feet long."

"Phew! And they towed that thing clear from England?"

"Yes."

"Well, well!"

The yacht was a fast sailer, and the cloud-bank rose rapidly on the horizon, and half an hour later it was easy to see that it was land, and not a cloud.

Half an hour later, the shores were plain to be seen, and the green trees, and the houses and buildings comprising the town lying back in a pretty, land-locked harbor made a picture that was very beautiful, and the spectators on the deck of the yacht were delighted.

"Isn't it beautiful?" exclaimed Dorothy.

"Very beautiful," Dorothy."

"Do you know," said Mamie, "I do not think there are any views in the world as beautiful as the really beautiful views that one sees sailing into a harbor, after having been at sea for a while. The fact that we are out on the water, a dreary and desolate waste, seems to augment the beauties of the land."

"I have noticed that," said Mildred Shepard.

"What makes the land look so beautiful to me," said Little Punn, soberly, "is the fact that I have hopes each time that Brownie may go ashore and get lost, and we will be enabled to sail without him! With him gone, our trip around the world would be a grand success, and very enjoyable; but his presence casts a gloom over everything! Just look at his face! Wouldn't it jar you?"

"Oh, I can't see that it is any more calculated to jar one than is yours, Little Punn," said Mamie, coolly. She was a jolly girl, and mischievous, and delighted in teasing Little Punn when she got the chance.

Brown's face brightened wonderfully at this; the truth was the youth liked Mamie very much, and to hear her speak so fondly of him was joy supreme.

"Mamie, you shouldn't talk like that," said Little Punn,

in mock reproach. "It hurts my feelings, and see what an effect it has on Brownie; he is in the seventh or seventeenth heaven of happiness because you spoke well of him, and it is wrong to raise hopes in his breast, only to cast them down again and cause the poor boy's heart to break!—break!—br—"

"I'll cause your soft head to ache!—ache!—ache!" cried Brown, wrathfully, as he gave the little chap a blow on the jaw that very nearly floored him.

Little Punn dodged out of the way and chuckled, for he did not mind the blow, and was well pleased because of the fact that he had been able to work Brown up, and get him the next thing to angry.

"Served you right, Little Punn!" said Mamie. "You needed that!"

The yacht was soon in the harbor, and came to anchor. Ben and his friends went ashore, and went to the best hotel in the town, and spent two days there, making excursions into the surrounding country. Then they went aboard the yacht once more, sailed out of the harbor, and headed toward the East.

"Will we see any more islands before reaching the Mediterranean, Ben?" asked Dorothy, as they stood on the deck, looking back at the Bermudas, now fast sinking out of sight.

"We will sight The Azores, I think."

"Is there anything of interest to be seen there, Ben?" asked Mamie.

"Oh, nothing of any great interest. The islands are of volcanic origin, and the chance of there being an earthquake there at almost any time is the most interesting feature, I guess."

"Say, let's stop there for a day or two, Ben," said Little Punn.

"Why do you wish to stop there?"

"In the hope that Brownie will get the shaking up he so richly deserves!"

"Well, if I got shook up, the rest of you would get shook up at the same time, Punny," said Brown.

"What government do the islands belong to, Ben?" asked Mildred.

"Portugal."

"Let's stop there long enough, at any rate, so that we may go ashore, Ben," said Mamie; "we can then say that we have been in 'The Azores.'"

"All right; I will do so."

"What island and what town do you wish to visit in The Azores?" asked the captain, when Ben told him they wished to stop a day or so there.

"I don't know, captain," the youth said; "I will leave that to you."

"All right; I guess we will make it Fayal, then, as that is one of the most interesting of the group of islands. Horta, a town of about ten thousand population, is the chief town of the island."

"Very well; that will suit us."

The Azores were sighted early in the morning, and everybody was on deck to view them as they grew in size, seemingly, right up out of the ocean.

The yacht came to anchor in the harbor, and Ben and his companions got ready to go ashore at once.

When they reached the pier, they were immediately surrounded by a crowd of Portuguese men, women and children, who importuned them by signs for money, but they were such a lazy, dirty-looking people that they did not get much for their pains.

"Say, if these are representative specimens, I don't care to make the acquaintance of many of the citizens of Horta," said Little Punn.

"You are right, for once," said Brown.

The party left the pier, and made its way up the street to the town.

"Goodness! look yonder!" suddenly exclaimed Dorothy, pointing; "they are leading a donkey out of the house!"

"I understand that the donkeys live right in the houses," said Ben with a smile. "They are, in fact, members of the family circle."

"Great guns! is that so, Ben?" cried Little Punn. "Well, wouldn't that bump you, though!"

This was soon proved to be true, for before they had reached the main portion of the town they saw at least fifty donkeys being led out of houses—which were not much to speak of, by the way, as it never gets cold enough to freeze in The Azores, so nothing much in the way of houses is needed.

A throng of men and boys with donkeys surrounded Ben's party, and talked and gesticulated, and finally Ben found one who could speak a little broken—very much broken—English, and the youth bargained with him for donkeys for the crowd.

All mounted, and then they set out, followed by a great crowd, and rode through the town, and started up the steep mountain side back of it, following a road that wound here and there, and was as smooth as asphalt, being made of stone, covered with fine sea sand, packed as hard as the stone, almost.

"Say, this is all right," said Little Punn, who was always happy when enjoying anything in the way of a

novelty; "I shall not soon forget my ride up the mountain in Fayal."

He was destined to undergo an experience, before he got through with it, that would make him remember the ride all his life—but of that later.

It was slow work climbing the mountain side, but at last they did reach the top, which, back of the town at the point where they were, is nearly two thousand feet high; and then, after pausing to enjoy the view back down upon the town and out over the harbor and ocean, to where other islands of the group could be seen, they started out for a ride into the country.

They had gone perhaps three miles, and were riding along enjoying themselves splendidly, and talking and laughing, when suddenly the ground underneath the feet of the donkeys began to tremble, and then to rock, causing the mules to sway and stagger as if they were drunk. At the same time there was a rumbling noise resembling the sound of thunder at a distance.

"An earthquake!" cried the muleteer, who spoke English.

"An earthquake!" cried Little Punn, who was having trouble with his mule, it having taken fright and rushed twenty or thirty feet out to one side, off the road; "wouldn't that jar—"

At this instant the earth parted exactly underneath the mule's feet, spreading apart a distance of five or six feet, at least, and the mule and Little Punn disappeared from the view of the other members of the party!

CHAPTER II.

LITTLE PUNN STILL ALIVE.

"He's a goner!"

"That is the last we will see of Little Punn!"

"He has fallen to his death!"

"Oh, this is terrible!"

"Poor Little Punn!"

Such were the exclamations given vent to by the other members of the party, and there was a horror-stricken accent to their voices, for they thought sure that the little chap had gone down to his death.

The rocking, swaying motion of the earth had stopped now, and only the trembling, quivering sensation could be felt, which was evidence that the worst was past, unless another shock should follow, which was not likely.

Ben leaped to the ground, and running to the opening

which Little Punn and the mule had disappeared, looked down.

"He is not dead!" Ben cried, joyously; "he is not even injured!"

"Good! Good!"

"Oh, I'm so glad!"

"And so am I!"

"Hurrah!"

"Little Punn is all right!"

"I knew he wasn't hurt!" growled Brown. "He is too tough a little rascal to get hurt!"

"Come here and take a look, everybody," said Ben, turning toward the rest with a smile. And then he hastened forward, and he, Tom and Spalding assisted the girls to alight. Then all went to the edge of the opening and looked down.

The sight that met their gaze was so comical that, despite the fact that the situation even now might be considered serious—in that it was difficult to see how the youth and donkey were to be gotten out of the crevice—the youths and girls could not help laughing.

Fifteen feet below, which was as deep as the opening extended, was the mule, standing upright, and seated astride the donkey was Little Punn, who was looking up with a comical grin on his face.

"Hello, people!" he cried; "how are you, anyway, and did anyone else take a drop down forty degrees below zero, as I have done?"

"I guess you are the only one who got into serious trouble, Punny," replied Ben.

"You forgot the donkey!" said Mamie, mischievously, willing to joke at Little Punn's expense, now that she knew he was uninjured.

"Wouldn't that bump you!" the little chap said in an injured tone. "Classes me with the donkey!"

"Just where you deserve to be classed," grinned Brown, highly pleased, seemingly, though his face had been the color of ashes a few moments before, when it was thought the little chap had gone down to his death.

"Judging by your ears, that is where you ought to be classed, Brownie! But say, Ben, how am I to get out of here, anyway?"

"I don't know, Punny; but perhaps we may find a place where it will be possible for the donkey to climb out. I'll investigate at once."

Ben made his way along the crevice for a distance of ~~perhaps a hundred yards~~, where it came to an end, and here he thought it possible that the donkey could climb out, as

the opening was only about ten feet deep, and the ground sloped up gradually to the surface.

"Ride here, Punny," called Ben. "I think you can get out here, all right."

"Good enough! I'll be right along," came back the reply. Little Punn had hard work getting the donkey to start, as it seemed so badly frightened that it did not wish to move; but he finally succeeded, and got the animal started along the bottom of the crevice, though the progress was slow.

When the end of the crevice was reached, Little Punn got down off the donkey's back, and taking hold of the bridle rein, pulled and clucked at the animal in an effort to get it to follow him up the incline to the surface. The donkey balked, however, and refused to make the ascent, and Little Punn pulled and coaxed and threatened alternately, while the youths, standing above, yelled at the donkey and cheered Little Punn on with utter impartiality.

The donkey was stubborn, however, and refused to be dragged up the incline. Doubtless it feared it was all a scheme to get it up on the surface of the earth, and then let it drop down into another opening, and it was determined it would not lend itself to the affair, to afford amusement for the party.

Finally Little Punn gave up in disgust, and throwing the reins down, ran up the incline to the surface and said to the man who owned the donkey:

"If you want him out, get him out! I can't afford to fool any more time away. Life is too short."

"It isn't as short as you are, Punny," said Rhyme, but no one laughed, and Rhyme subsided.

"Me git donk' outy ther'," the Portuguese said, and he ran down the incline, and crowding past the donkey, put his shoulder against it, and began pushing. The donkey was small and light, while its owner was a good-sized man, and strong, and the result was that the animal was pushed up the incline slowly but surely, the man yelling something at the animal in the Portuguese dialect in a manner quite vigorous.

When the donkey's head was near enough to the top of the incline so he could do so, Ben seized the bridle rein, and pulled, aiding the owner of the animal in some degree. Little Punn was standing there, and feeling that he deserved to get something of enjoyment out of the affair, he slyly took a penknife out of his pocket, opened one of the blades, not much larger than a small pen-point, and jabbed it into the donkey a quarter of an inch or so. The result exceeded his expectations: The donkey was evidently more sensitive to pain than the youth had thought it would be,

for it gave vent to a squeal of rage and pain, and suddenly kicked out with both hind legs in a most vigorous and energetic fashion. The donkey's feet caught the worthy owner of the animal full in the stomach, and he was hurled backward down the incline, and to the bottom of the creviced, a distance of ten or a dozen feet, where he alighted upon his back and rolled and kicked about gasping for breath for a minute at least, before he was able to get his breath.

The spectators thought at first that the fellow would not be able to get his breath again at all, even Little Punn being sober faced, but finally the Portuguese struggled to his feet uttering invectives against the donkey in his outlandish dialect, and then all had to laugh. The comical feature of the affair was impressed upon them, and they could not help laughing.

The girls stepped back, so that the fellow could not see them, and laughed till the tears came to their eyes, but the youths were not so careful, and laughed at the fellow without any attempt at concealment, much to his wrath, and there is no doubt but what he directed some of his invective toward them—but the thought of this did not disturb the youths in the least.

"Say, that was rich!" said Tom, who, being of a practical turn of mind, seldom saw much to laugh at; but this was so ludicrous an affair that he could not help it.

"Rich as cream a foot thick!" chuckled Little Punn. None of the youths, so far as the little chap knew, had seen his act of sticking the point of his knife into the donkey, and he was careful to say nothing about it.

"That was the finest thing I have seen in a long time!"

"It took the cake!"

"It took the donkey's owner down the line in a hurry!"

"That's right! Didn't he sail!"

Ben had held to the bridle rein, so the donkey had not been able to get back down the incline, and the man having returned to the work of pushing—though exercising considerable care, now—they managed, presently, to get the donkey out and onto the level ground.

Then the owner of the donkey gave the poor brute several resounding kicks to even up the account between the two, and it was decided to start again on their trip, as the ground had now entirely ceased trembling. Indeed, but for the giant crevice yawning at their feet, the members of the party would not have known, to look around them, that there had been an earthquake shock.

The members of the party remounted their donkeys and started again, Little Punn having taken his place on the donkey that had kicked the Portuguese. Every once in a

while the little chap would look at the fellow, who was walking in front, and chuckle, and finally Markham asked him what he was laughing at.

"Oh, nothing," the little chap replied, with a grin.

"Surely there was nothing so very funny in your adventure back yonder," Markham said.

"Oh, no; not so very funny. If you think I think that was funny you are away off your trolley. Say, I thought I was a goner, and that is no joke!"

"I should think you would have had some such thoughts!"

"Now you're talking! Say, did any such thing ever happen to anyone else? I doubt it. I always get the unusual experiences if there are any going the rounds!"

"Well, I am glad of it, when such experiences as the one you had are going the rounds," said Spalding. "I wouldn't wish to have the earth open underneath me and swallow me up, as it did you!"

"It didn't swallow me up—it swallowed me down!"

"You and the donkey!" said Rhyme.

And little Punn chuckled again. Whenever he thought of the manner in which the donkey had kicked its owner down into the crevice he could not help laughing.

"I'd like to know what you are chuckling about," said Rhyme.

"Oh, nothing in particular."

"I know," said Brown; "Punny stuck the point of his knife into the donkey's shoulder, and made him kick the fellow! I saw him!"

"Did you, Punny?" asked Markham.

"Own up, you bad, cruel boy!" said Mamie.

But the youth shook his head.

"'Tis false!" he said, dramatically. "That is just one of Brownie's lies. He never saw me do anything of the kind."

Brown insisted that he had seen the youth do as he had said, but it was a question between the two, so the others did not know which to believe.

The ride into the country was enjoyed by all, as there was much to see that was new and strange. The roads were fine, and this made the going good, and as they were nearing Horta on the return, all voted the trip a most enjoyable one—even Little Punn, who had undergone such a hair-raising experience during the earthquake shock, concurring in this.

They rode down the steep hillside and into the town of Horta, and through its streets toward the pier. The muleteer had agreed to take them there.

But Little Punn was not to escape without one more

thrilling adventure. When they were almost through the town, and not a great distance from the pier, the donkey Little Punn was riding suddenly leaped forward almost into a run, and galloped toward one of the houses standing beside the street. Little Punn had been almost unseated by the suddenness of the donkey's movement, but he hung on, and tugged at the bridle reins in an effort to stay the animal's flight. No use; the donkey was stubborn, and was bound to have its way, the result being that Little Punn came to grief, for when the donkey reached the house, it did not stop at all, but bolted through the open doorway, leaving its erstwhile rider lying flat upon his back on the ground just outside the doorway, he having been knocked off by coming in contact with the top of the door frame.

Little Punn was not injured to speak of, his shoulders having struck against the woodwork of the door frame, but he looked anything but pleased when he picked himself up and brushed the dust off his clothing.

The members of the party waited till they saw whether or not the little chap was hurt, and on learning that he was not injured, they laughed till the tears came.

"Oh, this is too funny!" almost gasped Brown, who was always well pleased when Little Punn was having trouble; "this is the best thing that I have seen lately!"

"Did it jar you, Punny?" drawled Spalding, making use of the little chap's favorite expression.

"Did it," little Punn replied; "well, if you think it didn't, just you try it, that's all, and see whether or not it jars you! I've been jarred a whole lot to-day!"

"You have been out of luck a bit," smiled Ben.

"It was too funny!" laughed Mamie, who was a girl who always saw the fun in everything.

"Yes, you are right, Mamie; I agree with you that it was too funny altogether," the little chap said. "It was so much too funny that I couldn't enjoy it at all."

"But we can!" with another peal of laughter.

"So I observe!" drily. "Say, do you know, I believe the earthquake and that donkey had conspired to try and kill me off to-day!"

"But the donkey got shook up the same as you did by the earthquake," said Markham.

"So it did; well, I guess the donkey wanted to get even with somebody for that."

"It wanted to get even with you for sticking the point of your knife in its shoulder, I guess," said Brown; "and I think it did so."

The owner of the donkey had dragged it forth from the house by this time, and he explained that the house was where it lived, and it had simply gone in when it reached

its home. Little Punn accepted the explanation, but refused to remount the donkey.

"No, thank you; I'll walk the rest of the way, if you please!" he said. "Let the donkey go back to its happy home and stay there with the rest of the family. I don't care to take any more chances on having my brains knocked out; I may need some of them in the future!"

And the little chap walked the rest of the way.

CHAPTER III.

LITTLE PUNN HAS ANOTHER NARROW ESCAPE.

As soon as all were aboard, Ben gave the captain instructions to get under way, and this was done, the yacht leaving its moorings and sailing out into the ocean a few minutes later.

Ben and his friends stood on the deck and watched the town of Horta and, later, the island of Fayal disappear in the distance, and then they fell to discussing their adventures on the island.

"We can now say we have felt the shock of an earthquake," said Mamie. "I am rather glad than otherwise now, since none of us were injured."

"There is no reason why you should not be glad," said Little Punn; "if you had undergone the experience that I did, you wouldn't be so glad, though, I am thinking."

Mamie laughed, and the rest followed suit—with the exception of Little Punn, of course, who assumed an injured look.

"Say, Little Punn will not soon forget his experience with the earthquake, I'll wager," said Markham.

"I guess not!"

"He'll remember it as long as he lives!"

"He certainly will!"

"How did you enjoy it, anyway, Punny?" asked Tom.

"How did I enjoy it?"

"Yes."

"Well, all I have to say is, just imagine yourself as undergoing the experience of feeling the sensation of dropping down into the bowels of the earth astride a little, sawed-off donkey, and see how you think you would like it!"

"I'll wager Punny thought he would never stop short of the centre of the earth," said Brown.

"You are right, for once, Brownie. That is just the thought that struck me, and it wasn't a pleasant one, either,

I assure you—say, I forgot; is my hair white?" and the little chap took off his hat, and looked around at the others inquiringly, and with apparent seriousness.

"No; not white, Punny," said Ben.

"It is tow-colored, similar to the hair of the average Arkansas backwoods youngster, but it isn't white," said Spalding.

"Well, you needn't make fun of my hair, Spaldy, you great, big, blonde stand-up-in-the-corner! You're tow-headed yourself!"

Spalding laughed lazily.

"That's all right; I wasn't making fun, Punny."

"Well, I'm glad we visited The Azores Islands, Ben," said Dorothy. "Somehow, I like islands. They are so beautiful, all surrounded by water, and the mountains and hills seem higher, on account of the fact that the level of the ocean is where it can be taken into account, and the height above the level can be realized."

"That is a fact," agreed Ben. "When one is inland, say in the Rocky Mountains, they do not seem so high, for the reason that you ascend them gradually, and, as you say, there is no ocean in sight to help one in judging height."

"Where are we bound for now, Ben?" asked Mamie. "Are we headed straight for Italy, or will we visit a few more islands on the way there?"

"It doesn't matter to me, Mamie," the youth replied. "I would as soon visit the different islands that come our way while en route to Italy as not. We may never be in this part of the world again, and might as well improve our opportunities."

"That's right," agreed Markham.

"What other islands are there between here and Italy, Ben?" asked Mildred. "I have forgotten most of my geography."

"There are two small groups lying perhaps a hundred miles off our course that we could visit. They are the Madeira Islands and the Canary Islands. They lie nearly a hundred miles off the coast of Africa."

"Let's visit both groups, Ben," said Mamie.

"Just as the majority say."

"I'm in for it!"

"And I!"

"Count me in!"

All seemed in favor of visiting the islands, with the possible exception of Little Punn, who was silent until the rest got through, and then he asked:

"Are those islands of volcanic origin, the same as The Azores, Ben?"

The rest burst into laughter, but the little chap looked very solemn, and never cracked a smile.

"I think they are all of volcanic origin, Punny," replied Ben.

"Then you can't have my vote. I most emphatically vote 'no,' but as I am in a hopeless minority, I yield to the wishes of the other members of the party. I think, however, that I shall remain on the yacht. I don't believe I shall go ashore at all."

"Oh, you'll change your mind, I think, when we get there. I don't think you need be afraid of being shaken up by another earthquake. They occur but seldom, and we might remain on the island of Fayal, for instance, for years, and never feel another shock."

"But that shock was such-a terrible one, Ben! I shall feel it all the rest of my life!"

The little chap looked so woebegone that the rest had to laugh.

"That's right, laugh!" he said. "I would laugh, if I were in your place. It is very funny, I know; but, of course, I can't see where the fun comes in."

The others laughed still more at this, and Little Punn suddenly brightened up.

"All right," he said; "I'm in favor of visiting the islands, after all. I think that perhaps the next earthquake will get Brownie, and that is worth taking almost any risks for."

Ben gave the captain instructions to head for the Madeira Islands, and the captain did so. They left Fayal in the afternoon and the Madeira Islands were sighted early next morning.

All went ashore, and they remained there, making a trip into the interior, as at Fayal, and returning to the yacht about the middle of the afternoon.

Then the yacht sailed away again, and was headed for the Canary Islands, Ben having instructed the captain to that effect.

The islands were reached in the night, and the yacht lay to in a harbor of the island of Teneriffe. Next morning when the members of the party came on deck and saw the great sky-piercing peak of Teneriffe, they stared at it in amazement.

"Isn't that a wonderful sight?" exclaimed Dorothy.

"Indeed it is!" from Mamie.

"I never expected to see such a sight!" declared Mildred.

"That beats the band!" said Rhyme.

"It is out of sight!" said Little Punn—which was almost literally true, the point of the peak, almost two miles

and a half away, seeming to pierce the clouds. The peak rises almost straight up from the water side into the air, which makes it seem higher than it is—though two miles and a half is quite high, as all will admit.

"I never would have thought such a high peak was to be found on earth," said Markham.

"Well, you see, it rises straight up from the water, and we get to see it from base to summit," said Ben.

"Yes; that is what makes the difference."

The members of the party went ashore, and climbed as high up the peak as they could without becoming too tired, and there they spent a couple of hours looking out over the ocean.

The majority of the islands of the group could be seen from where the party was, and they looked very beautiful, as seen in the distance.

"Say, wouldn't this be a dandy place for a fellow to come to who wanted to break the record for high diving, though," remarked Little Punn.

"He wouldn't have any trouble in getting it high enough for him," drawled Spalding.

"There is no doubt about that," smiled Mamie.

"How high up are we here?" asked Brown.

"About half a mile, I should say," said Ben.

"It seems more like a mile," said Rhyme, "but the distance always looks greater from a height looking down, than it does from the ground looking up."

"I have a good mind to dive off here, and break the record for high diving," said Little Punn, rising and walking to the edge of the precipice and making as if to dive off.

"You'd break your neck instead of the record," said Brown.

"You'll fall over there, Punny; better come away," said Markham.

"Oh, I guess not," the little chap replied; "my head is level, and—great guns!"

The little chap suddenly swayed and staggered, he having been overcome by dizziness just when he was boasting of his level-headedness, and with a cry of terror he lost his balance, and in another instant he would have plunged headlong down into space, had it not been for the prompt action of Ben Bright, who saw what was coming, and leaped forward and seized the little chap in a grip of iron. And then both came very near losing their lives, for Ben had leaped forward with a little more force than he intended, and he was forced to drop flat upon the rock upon his face, and hold on with one hand while he held Little Punn sus-

pended above the abyss with the other, having been unable to keep the youth from going over.

Ben had a good hold on the little chap's clothing, however, and held onto him firmly, when Tom and Markham sprang to his assistance, and the three of them lifted the little fellow back onto the cliff.

All had been well-nigh paralyzed with fear that one or both of the youths would go over the precipice to a horrible death in the waters below, or against the rough outjutting crags and rocks, and now, when they saw that both were safe, exclamations escaped them.

"Goodness! What a narrow escape!"

"You came very near having your last adventure that time, Punny!"

"Yes, and he came very near causing Ben to do the same!"

"What will you do next, anyway?"

"You'll get your everlasting, one of these days!"

"Say, you'd better sit down and keep quiet for a while, my boy!"

"Little Punn was somewhat pale, but was remarkably self-possessed. It was hard to break his nerve.

"That's all right," he said, with an attempt at airiness that was not fully successful; "I just did that on purpose to see if I could scare you folks."

"Too thin!"

"That'll do to tell!"

"Go on, Punny!"

"It's a fact, just the same," the little chap declared; "and then, I wished to see whether or not you girls loved me! I knew I could do it that way."

"You couldn't tell anything in that way, Little Punn," said Mamie; "we would look disturbed if a cat, a dog or a monkey were to fall over there!"

"Or a donkey!" said Brown, with a malicious grin.

"Like yourself, for instance!" flashed the little chap, and then he turned a reproachful look on Mamie.

"Mamie, I thought better of you than that," he said; "the idea of your comparing me to a cat or a monkey!"

"Shure an' yez are afther bein' a reg'lar litttle monkey, an' that's the thruth," said Patsy Dooley, the Irish member of the party.

"Dat's right," agreed Dan Denny.

"Well, if there is anything in the way of a human being who looks more like a monkey than you do, Patsy, I'd hate to see him!" said Little Punn. "If you were at large in the woods of Africa you would be taken for a monkey sure!"

"Oh, go on, yez are dhe worst litttle spalpane thot iver
Oi saw in all me days, Punny!"

After some further conversation the party deseeded from the peak, and made their way back on board the yacht.

Ben instructed the captain to get under way, and head straight for the Strait of Gibraltar, and this was done, all remaining on deck to watch the islands disappear from view.

Guesses were made as to how long it would be before the top of the peak of Teneriffe would disappear, and it was interesting to watch the peak grow slowly and gradually thinner and shorter, until at last it looked like a small monument a few feet in height, rising out of the water.

"Isn't there something interesting of a historical nature regarding those islands, Ben?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes," the youth replied; "those islands were known to the Greeks and Romans many hundreds of years ago. They were the only land west of the Pillars of Hercules—as the Rock of Gibraltar and the other mountain on the African coast opposite are called—that were known in those times, and Columbus started from there on his voyage of discovery when he discovered America."

"And they are also noted as being the place where A. Little Punn came very near falling into the deep, blue sea!" said the little chap.

"It's a pity Ben didn't let you fall over into the 'deep, blue sea!'" said Brown.

"Oh, I know you would have liked it if I had done so," said Little Punn, cheerfully; "but it wouldn't have redounded to your benefit if I had. Mamie would never have looked upon you with favor, anyway!"

Brown flushed and the rest laughed, which added to the youth's discomfiture.

"You are the nerviest little idiot I ever saw!" muttered Brown.

"And you haven't any nerve at all!" with a chuckle, and a meaning glance at Mamie, which caused that jolly girl to laugh again.

"Take a look, everybody, quick!" said Pinky Sweet; "the peak is just disappearing from view."

All looked, and watched the famous Peak of Teneriffe disappear from view, sinking out of sight into the ocean, and then Dorothy broke the silence with:

"I suppose the next land we will see will be the Rock of Gibraltar?"

"That will be the next land that we will see, I think, Dorothy."

And it was, the great Rock of Gibraltar being sighted at about ten o'clock next day.

CHAPTER IV.

IN NAPLES.

"That looks natural," said Little Punn; "I tell you, we are certainly beoming great travellers when we can say of such sights as this, 'it looks natural.'"

"You are right, Little Punn," said Mamie; "but it has not been so very long since we were here, so it could not do otherwise than look natural."

"That is true, too."

The yacht sailed in through the strait past the "Pillars of Hercules," and on into the Mediterranean.

"I guess none of you care to visit the Rock of Gibraltar again," remarked Ben.

"Oh, no; I don't think so, Ben," said Dorothy. "We would rather go on, and visit places that we have not already seen."

"Yes, indeed," coincided Mamie; "but, I forgot, Mildred hasn't been there. She wasn't with us on our other trip around the world."

"No, but I wouldn't want you to stop there just on my account," the girl said. "I have seen it from a distance, and that is so much more than I ever hoped to do that I am satisfied."

"Very well," said Ben. "By the way, shall we touch at the islands of Corsica and Sardinia on our way to Italy?"

"Will it be out of our way, Ben?"

"Oh, no."

"Then let us do so by all means."

So it was decided to touch at the islands, and this was done, after which the yacht headed straight for Italy.

"What point in Italy will we visit first, Ben?" asked Dorothy, as they sat at supper the evening after leaving Sardinia.

"I told the captain to head for Naples," said Ben.

"Naples! Oh, that will be splendid!"

"I have always wanted to see Naples," said Mamie.

"And so have I," said Mildred.

"I don't want to go there, Ben," said Little Punn, looking very grave.

"Why not, Punny?"

"Because I've always heard it said, 'see Naples, and die,' and I don't want to die just yet."

"Oh, that does not mean that if you see Naples you will die, Punny."

"It doesn't?"

"No."

"What does it mean, then?"

"It means that Naples is so beautiful, that it is such a beautiful sight, that when you have seen it you will be ready to die, for you could not hope to ever find a more beautiful place."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes."

"Well, I won't be ready to die, no matter how beautiful Naples may be. I rather think it will have the opposite effect on me. I know it works that way when I see a beautiful girl like Mamie here! It makes me want to live all the more!"

"Take that for your insolence, sir," and Mamie gave the youth a slap on the side of the face, and pretended to be angry, which she was not, by any means.

"Say, you'll make me have the ear-ache if you aren't careful, Mamie," the little fellow protested; "and, besides, you make me think of my mother, and that makes me homesick! Please don't slap me again!"

"I won't if you behave yourself."

"Served him right!" murmured Brown.

"Oh, of course, you'd be glad," said Little Punn. "I beg leave to inform you, Brownie, that it did not hurt at all—that it was merely a love tap!"

Whereat Mamie gave him another slap; but Little Punn did not mind it.

Next morning the members of the party went up on deck, and watched the shores of Italy grow and gradually come nearer. At a point almost directly ahead one peak of the mountains back of Naples stood up higher than the rest, and from it smoke was issuing.

"That is Mount Vesuvius," said Ben.

"Will we ascend Mount Vesuvius, Ben?" asked Dorothy.

"If the majority wish to do so, Dorothy," the youth replied. "I confess I should like to look down into the crater once."

"And so should I!"

"And I," from Mamie.

"The same here," said Rhyme.

"Will it be necessary to ride donkeys, Ben?" asked Little Punn.

"I don't know, Punny; but I think it likely."

"Then I don't think I shall care to make the ascent! I've had about all the donkey riding that I care to have for a year or so, anyway."

"Perhaps the Italian donkeys will be better and more docile than The Azores Islands donkeys," said Mamie.

"They will have to be, or they won't have the honor of bearing such a distinguished person as yours truly up the mountain."

The members of Ben's party enjoyed the beautiful view, ever-changing, and growing more distinct and beautiful every minute, until at last the yacht was in the harbor, and then all got ready and went ashore.

They went to one of the finest American hotels in the city, and were assigned to rooms, and spent the rest of the day in looking about the city. At night they went to the theatre, and although they could not understand the words, they enjoyed the performance. For once, they heard the Italian opera sang in its own home.

The people in the theatre were well dressed, and to look at them they did not look so unlike an audience in a theatre in New York city.

Sitting near where Ben and his friends had seats was a party of young Italian "bloods." They had been drinking, undoubtedly, and were as boisterous as the rules of the theatre would permit them to be. They were ogling ladies, and staring at them in a rather rude manner, and in looking about them their eyes fell on Dorothy, Mamie and Mildred, whose fair, fresh and beautiful faces attracted their attention. They began looking at the girls and making remarks to each other, and Ben, who took it all in, began to get angry. He did not let on, however, but watched the performance, and talked to the members of his party in low tones, paying no attention to the bloods.

If the girls noticed that they were the objects of observation by the bloods, they gave no sign of it, but preserved an unruffled demeanor, and kept their attention on the stage.

Ben did not anticipate any trouble, as there were enough in his party to easily give the four or five Italians a good thrashing, should they get too offensive in their actions, but it was unpleasant to have them staring at the girls, and he was not sorry when at last the performance was ended. In leaving the theatre he lost sight of the Italian bloods, and would have thought no more about them, but for the fact that as he and his friends emerged from the theatre they saw them standing near. The Italians spoke to each other, and looked in the direction of Ben's party when it appeared, but made no demonstration, being deterred, doubtless, by the number of youths in the party.

As it was only a few blocks to the hotel, Ben and his friends decided to walk, and they started, moving along slowly, talking and laughing. They had gone about a block,

when suddenly a party of young fellows came up behind them and pushed right in among the youths, and two or three brushed against the girls in rather a rude fashion. At a glance Ben recognized the fellows as being the bloods who had been acting so rudely in the theatre, and a fierce thrill of delight went over him as he realized that now he would have a chance to give them the treatment their conduct deserved, but which could not, of course, be meted out to them in a place like the theatre, where a disturbance of any kind would have resulted in landing all concerned in the lock-up.

"Give it to the scoundrels, fellows!" Ben cried, in a grim, angry tone, and as he spoke he struck out, landing a blow behind the ear of the blood who happened to be nearest him, and down the fellow dropped as if shot. The other youths were almost as prompt to act, and the result was that almost before the fellows knew what had happened to them, they had all measured their length on the pavement.

"Oh, come away, Ben—boys!" exclaimed Dorothy; "the police will come, and will arrest you, because you are Americans. Let us hasten away from this place."

"Let's wait and give them one more round," said Tom, whose blood was up. "We'll teach them a lesson that will do them a lot of good—the cowardly scoundrels!"

"I'll watch for the police," said Little Punn; "while the rest of you knock the Italians out."

The fellows had none of them been rendered unconscious by the first blows they had received, and they now struggled to their feet, giving vent to exclamations which the youths did not understand, but they could interpret them very well by the tone. The fellows might just as well have stayed down the first time, however, for when they got up it was only to be knocked down again—and this time they stayed down, for the youths had hit hard.

"Now we will go," said Ben, in a cool, quiet tone; "I guess those fellows won't bother us any more."

"Not right away, anyway," said Tom, grimly.

"They'll take a little nap before doing anything more," said Little Punn.

"I'll wager those fellows will think they ran up against a cyclone," said Rhyme.

"Their heads will be sore for a while," said Markham.

"They'll have real swelled heads in the morning," said Little Punn.

"And they ought to have," said Mamie. "I saw them looking at we girls in the theatre, and I could have slapped their faces."

"You noticed them, then?" asked Ben.

"We couldn't help it, Ben," said Dorothy: "but, of course, we did not let on."

"I noticed them," the youth said; "and I felt like going over to where they were and bumping their heads together; but, of course, I did not dare do anything like that in a theatre."

The party made their way along the street, and were molested no more, reaching the hotel presently in safety.

They went at once to their rooms, but had been there but a few minutes when there came a knock at the door of Ben's and Tom's room. Ben opened the door, to see the hotel clerk standing there.

"Did you have some trouble down on the street a few minutes ago, Mr. Bright?" he asked, in a voice that trembled.

Ben started.

"A little. Why?" he answered.

"Did you and your young gentlemen friends knock some Italians down, and leave them lying insensible in the street?"

"We thumped four or five scoundrels who broke into our crowd, and brushed rudely against the young ladies, yes."

"Exactly. Well, the police are coming to arrest you."

"The police coming to arrest us!"

"Yes."

"Why don't they arrest the scoundrels who caused the trouble?"

"Well, you see, this is Naples, and in Italy; and you are Americans."

"I see. That explains it, of course. Well, what are we to do? It is an outrage!"

"So it is; and if they get you in their power, they will hold you for goodness knows how long, and make it as unpleasant as possible for you, and at the same time make it cost you a nice little sum."

"I wouldn't care so much; only if we were arrested and placed in jail, the young ladies who are with us would be worried greatly. I am not disposed to submit to arrest. But how did you find out about this?"

An American, who is a guest at this hotel, and who saw your encounter with the fellows, told me. He remained behind, and heard the fellows demand that the police who had gathered at the spot arrest you, and as soon as he saw they were going to accede to the fellows' demands, he hastened to the hotel to tell me, so I could warn you."

"I am very grateful to the gentleman, and to you: and now, what would you suggest? How are we to escape arrest?"

The clerk thought a moment, and then said:

"Did I not understand you to say that you have a yacht in the harbor?"

Ben gave a start.

"Yes," he replied; "we have a yacht. We are on a trip around the world, you know."

"Well, I will tell you what I would suggest—that you quietly and quickly leave the hotel and go on board your yacht, and stay there a day or so. You can put in the time looking at some of the islands near here. There are Sicily and Capri and a number of others, and then you can return and finish looking at the sights of Naples."

"I dislike this thing of running away," said Ben; "but I know it will save us a lot of trouble, and I think we had better do as you suggest. But can we get out of the hotel, and away unobserved, do you think?"

"Oh, yes; there is a side entrance, and I will show you out that way, and will order carriages to take you to the pier."

"I shall be much obliged," said Ben.

"Don't mention it. I am glad to be of service to a countryman of mine. But hurry! Those hounds are liable to come at any moment."

"We will be ready in a few minutes," said Ben, and he quickly notified the members of his party of what was in the wind, and all got ready and, taking their grips, followed the clerk along the hallway toward the rear of the hotel, and then down a back stairway out at a rear, side entrance. The clerk had telephoned for carriages while Ben was getting his companions ready to leave the hotel, and the carriages drove up a minute or so after they stepped out upon the street. They had scarcely more than gotten in the carriages when a body of policemen came running around the corner of the hotel yelling lustily for the drivers to wait; but Ben told the drivers to drive on and he would pay them three times the regular fare, and they whipped up and drove away at a rapid rate, leaving the policemen to yell and shake their clubs after them in impotent fury.

The clerk had told the drivers where to go, and they drove direct to the pier near which the yacht was anchored, and the party alighted. Ben paid the amount he had agreed to pay, and the drivers drove away. Then Ben led the way to where there were some boats, and after some delay managed to awaken the owner, who slept in a shed near by, and the youth hired the boatman to take them aboard the yacht.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE BLUE GROTTO.

"Well, wouldn't this galvanize your great-grandmother's ~~memory~~?" said Little Punn, when they were safely en-

sconced in the cabin of the "Genevra." "Doesn't it beat the Dutch, though!"

"Yes, and the Italians, too," smiled Ben.

"This was a pretty slick trick, wasn't it?" said Markham.

"Well, I'm very, very glad we got safely on board the yacht," said Dorothy. "I don't know what we girls would have done if you boys had been arrested."

"That's right; I don't know what you would have done, if you had been deprived of the protection of my good right arm," said Little Punn, importantly.

"I can't say I have enjoyed this adventure," said Mamie.

"Nor can I," agreed Mildred.

"I guess none of us enjoyed it very much," smiled Ben. "We got through in good shape, however, so it is all right."

"Yes, so it is—provided the police don't track us here, and come aboard and arrest us," said Brown.

"Do you think there is much danger of that, Ben?" asked Dorothy, anxiously.

"No, I don't think there is, Dorothy. The police do not know that we have a yacht in the bay, and the hotel clerk will not tell them."

"That's right; I guess we are safe now," said Rhyme.

The captain had risen, dressed himself, and come out of his stateroom to see what brought his passengers back to the yacht at such an hour, and when Ben told him, he said he would place four men on watch, and if the boats were seen coming off toward the yacht they would get the anchor up and sail out of the harbor. This could be done at any hour, as steam was kept up in the boilers.

"I shall be very glad to have you do that, captain," said Ben; "now that we have taken the trouble to try to get away from the officers I do not wish to be taken. It would be worse for us than if we had not tried to escape."

"That's right, Mr. Bright. Well, they won't get you. I'll put the men on guard, wake up the assistant engineer, and have everything in readiness so that we can get away in a hurry, if it becomes necessary."

"Thank you, Captain Ruff."

Ben and his friends retired to their staterooms, feeling easy in their minds, and slept till morning without being disturbed in any way.

"The officers did not show up, Mr. Bright," said the captain next morning. "I guess they didn't find where you went, after all."

"I guess not; and I'm glad of it. But, by the way, captain, it will not be good policy for us to return to the hotel for a day or so, and I guess we might as well put in our time visiting some of the islands near here."

"Very well, Mr. Bright. What island will you visit to-day?"

"I guess we will go, first, to the Island of Capri, and see the famous blue grotto. How far is it from here; do you know?"

"Oh, about twenty miles."

"That will be just a pleasant sail."

"So it will."

"You may up anchor as soon as you like, captain."

"Very well, sir."

The captain went on deck and began giving orders, and twenty minutes later the yacht began moving, and was headed out into the bay of Naples, its bow pointing almost southward.

The island of Capri lies just across the bay, south, and it was reached an hour and a half later. The captain had been there before, and knew just where the entrance to the grotto was, and brought the yacht to at a point near the entrance.

The boats were lowered, and the members of Ben's party got in, and the sailors rowed them to the entrance, which was in the sea wall at a point where the cliff extended straight upward for several hundred feet. The entrance is only about four feet high and four feet wide.

"Goodness!" murmured Dorothy; "do we go through that little opening, Ben?"

"Yes, Dorothy—that is, if the boats will go. It is going to be a tight squeeze, isn't it, captain?"

"The boats will go, all right, Mr. Bright; but it will be a tight squeeze, as you say."

"Everybody duck their heads!" said Little Punn; "that is, everybody but Brownie. I don't care if he tries to knock the cliff down with that soft block of his!"

"Oh, you make everybody tired with your chatter, Punny!" growled Brown.

"I know it makes you tired!"

"Ugh!" half shuddered Dorothy, as the boat entered the opening leading to the grotto. "It reminds me of the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky!"

"We will soon be where we will have plenty of room," said Ben.

"I enjoy anything like this," said Mamie.

"And so do I," said Little Punn. "Our tastes are very similar, Mamie; have you ever noticed it?"

"Oh, yes, I have noticed it quite frequently!"

"Ah, there, Brownie!" said Little Punn, in a tone of triumph. "How do you like it?"

"She's making fun of him, and the little idiot doesn't know it!" muttered Brown.

Just then the boats shot out into the little inland ~~lake~~, and exclamations of surprise and delight escaped all.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Dorothy.

"Isn't it beautiful?" from Mamie.

"It is lovely!" declared Mildred.

"It is beautiful, that's a fact!" said Ben.

"This is all right!"

"It is out of sight!"

"It is a pretty sight!"

"Worth coming to see!"

"So it is!"

"I'd come again, if I hadn't already been here," said Little Punn.

"How could you 'come again,' if you had not already been here?" asked Brown, sneeringly.

"Oh, that's all right; I know, but, of course, you could not be expected to know."

"Isn't the water a beautiful blue!" exclaimed Dorothy.

"Yes—like your eyes!" said Little Punn, and Dorothy blushed while the rest laughed.

"Ah, there, Ben! Took a rise out of you that time!" the little chap said, with a chuckle.

And then all laughed again.

"I wonder how deep the water is?" remarked Mamie.

"I suppose it goes clear to the bottom of the ocean," replied Tom.

"Phew! What if Brownie were to fall in!" the little fellow exclaimed; "it would be all up with him!"

"I think that if anybody falls in, it will be you," said Brown. "You are always trying some fool experiment or other, and getting the worst of it."

"Well, you needn't care!"

The party remained in the grotto a couple of hours, and then, when they started to leave it, they were horrified to find that they could not do so, the opening being almost closed now! The boats could not possibly get through, the water being up to within a foot of the top of the entrance.

"What a fool I was not to think of that," the captain exclaimed, with a blank look; "the tide has come in while we were in here, and has practically closed up the entrance, and made us prisoners."

"Well, wouldn't that jar you!" exclaimed Little Punn.

"That is a joke on us," said Ben: "I never thought of that, either. How long will we have to stay in here?"

"Several hours."

"Oh-h-h-h!" groaned Little Punn; "and I'm hungry now! We'll starve!"

"Oh, I guess there is no danger of that, Punny," said Markham.

"He's always thinking of eating!" said Brown.

"You ought to carry a lunch basket with you, Little Punn," said Mamie.

"Yes, and the rest of you would take it away from me, and eat all my luncheon up!" the little chap said. "Don't you believe I will do that!"

They were in for it, and could not help it, so decided to make the best of the situation. They talked and laughed, and sang songs, and the girls recited poetry, and they managed to enjoy themselves first rate. They had a regular concert there in the Blue Grotto, and the captain and the sailors were treated to an entertainment such as they had never had the good fortune to enjoy before. They—the sailors, especially—listened in open-mouthed wonderment while Dorothy and Ben sang songs, and it was certain that they enjoyed themselves, and the time did not hang heavy on their hands.

The water below and the rocky roof overhead caused the voices to echo and re-echo without taking anything away from the sweetness of the voices, and the singing was something all could remember.

Little Punn contributed his share to the general fund of amusement, by getting up and standing on a seat and making a characteristic speech. He could say more funny and absurd things, when he got fairly started, than anybody, and he fairly outdid himself on this occasion, and made all shriek with laughter, the captain and sailors laughing, also, till they nearly burst.

To cap the climax, the little chap, in prancing around on the seat, made a misstep and would have fallen into the water, had not the captain caught him and jerked him back, so that he fell into the boat instead of outside. He fell on top of Brown, and he managed to fall as heavily as possible, and everybody laughed more than ever—with the exception of Brown, who could not see much fun in this wind-up to Little Punn's part of the programme.

At last the tide receded, and the entrance became large enough so that the boats could pass through, and the party of sightseers hastened to get out of the Blue Grotto and return to the yacht, which was still lying where they had left it. The sailors had figured out what it was that was keeping the party in the grotto.

"Joye!" I had enough of that, and to spare!" said Little Punn, when they were on the deck of the yacht. "I shall feel fine for a year!"

"I hope you may," said Brown.

"Ol, I shall! How could I help doing so? Here I

have been penned up for hours in the Blue Grotto, and the same time was forced to associate with Blues Brown! If that isn't enough to make a fellow feel blue for a year or two, then I don't know what would do it!"

The others laughed, and Brown grunted something unintelligible and stalked away.

"Where shall we go next, Mr. Bright?" asked the captain. "Are there any more grottoes you wish to visit?"

"No more grottoes just at present, Captain Russ," smiled Ben. "We will try something else for a change."

"Where will we go, Ben?" asked Dorothy.

"There is an island just across the bay that is a sort of resort, and is fixed up for the accommodation of visitors. I guess we might as well go there. It is the Island of Ischia."

"That will do as well as any place, Ben," said Tom; "let's go there."

The others said the same, so Ben told the captain to head for Ischia, and he went away and gave the orders to that effect.

It was nearly a two hours' sail, and when they reached the island they were glad they had come. It was a beautiful place, and was fixed up so that it was possible to get full enjoyment out of everything. There was a splendid hotel run by Americans, and Ben and his friends decided to remain over night, as it was now getting along toward evening.

This they did, and next morning they went aboard the yacht, and instructed the captain to sail across the bay and set them ashore at Pozzuoli.

"What is there interesting at Pozzuoli, Ben?" asked Dorothy.

"Oh, a number of things."

"For instance?" remarked Tom.

"Well, for one thing, St. Paul landed there on his way to Rome, and he preached there a week."

"What else?" asked Little Punn.

"There are the remains of an amphitheatre there that seated thirty thousand people. In it the gladiators used to have combats, and it is said that Nero was at one time a gladiator there."

"Say, that is something to see—an amphitheatre in which the tyrant Nero once fought and bled and didn't die!" said Little Punn.

"The ruins of the temple of Serapis are still to be seen there, also," said Ben. "Oh, there is much that is of interest everywhere in this part of the world!"

"Yes, that is true," said Dorothy.

"The Holy Land, Egypt, Greece, Italy—all are alive with interest."

"Though all the people who figured in the events which occasion the interest are dead!" remarked Little Punn.

The party visited the places of interest in Pozzuoli, and then the yacht sailed away southward to Sicily, and they visited Messina and Palermo, after which they sailed back toward Naples, arriving there early in the morning.

"Do you think it will be safe for us to return to the hotel in Naples now, Ben?" asked Dorothy.

"I think so, the youth replied. "The police have doubtless made up their minds that we have gone for good, and will not be looking for us."

"Why should we go back there, Ben?" asked Dorothy, who seemed a bit doubtful regarding the matter. "Haven't we seen most everything that is of interest?"

"We have seen about everything in Naples, Dorothy; but we must not go away from here until after we have made the ascent of Mount Vesuvius."

"True; I had forgotten about that."

CHAPTER VI.

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT VESUVIUS.

The clerk at the hotel greeted Ben and his friends with smiling face.

"Well, you got away all right, and fooled the police in great shape, didn't you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, thanks to your kindness in giving us warning and aid," said Ben.

"Oh, that is all right; I'd go a long ways out of my way to help circumvent those fellows, especially when I am doing countrymen of mine a good turn."

Ben's party remained in Naples that day, looking at places of interest that they had not seen before, and then made preparations to make the ascent of Mount Vesuvius on the morrow.

It was a lovely day, and if they did not enjoy making the ascent, it would not be on account of bad weather. All were mounted on donkeys, and the guides informed them that it would take about four hours to make the ascent.

They got beautiful views of the city of Naples and the bay as they were going up, and when they reached the "Hermitage," which is the halfway house, so to speak, they paused and enjoyed the beautiful view for an hour, at least, before going on.

"I can now understand how the saying 'see Naples and die' originated," said Dorothy, as she gazed down upon the lovely scene; "I have seen many beautiful sights, but, I am confident, never before one to equal this."

"It is very, very beautiful," said Mamie.

"So it is," said Mildred.

Two hours later the party reached the summit and dismounted, glad to get off the backs of the meek but tired animals.

The scene when they reached the top of the volcano was one that was almost terrifying, and the girls were dismayed when Ben asked them if they wished to go down the incline on the rope railing which had been constructed for the purpose of carrying sightseers down to where the sides of the crater became perpendicular—the top part of the crater sloping down for quite a distance at an acute angle, before the perpendicular portion is reached.

A small fee is charged for carrying passengers down to where a sight into the crater may be had, and Ben wished to go down; but it took some little persuasion to induce the girls to consent to make the descent.

"What if one of the ropes should break, Ben?" asked Dorothy.

"I don't think there is any danger," the youth replied.

"Goodness! If they should!" the girl shuddered.

"We would take a tumble down into the volcano, that is all," said Little Punn, cheerfully. "We would then have splendid opportunities for studying the characteristics of the volcano at close range."

"Well, if you wish to study the characteristics of the volcano at close range, you may do so," said Mamie; "but I beg to be excused."

"Oh, there is no danger," said Markham. "This arrangement is certainly safe."

"Well, we will go down if you say so, Ben," said Dorothy.

"Very well; come along. I don't think there is a particle of danger."

"So they took their places in the car—that is, a portion of the crowd, as the car would not hold all of them—and were let down to the point where a view could be had down into the crater. Then the car was drawn up again, and the rest went down.

"What a dark, terrible-looking place it is down there," said Dorothy, looking down and turning shudderingly away. "What if the volcano should suddenly become active?"

"We would have to become suddenly active—and get out of here in a hurry!" grimed Little Punn.

"I doubt if we could get out in time," said Mildred.

"Oh, goodness! Don't talk like that, Mildred," said Dorothy.

"There is no danger," smiled Ben. "They have some scientific men employed here, and they can always tell when there is going to be an eruption."

Little Punn, with his usual enterprise, being dissatisfied with the point of view where they were, left the party, and made his way out to one side, and downward, in an effort to find a better place from which to view the crater. He had his eye on a spot—a sort of outjutting shoulder of stone or lava—and he was aiming for this. He had gotten away unnoticed, and was almost down to the point in question when the guides noticed him, and yelled at him.

"Come back!" they cried, excitedly; "come back, or you will fall down into the crater! The rocks and lava are slippery down there, and you will lose your footing before you know it!"

Little Punn may have been startled by the voices of the men; at any rate, he half turned when they called to him, and he looked up at them, and as he did so, his foot slipped, and quick as a flash he lost his balance and plunged head first over the edge of the crater, and disappeared from the view of his friends, a wild cry of fright coming up from him as he went over!

The girls gave utterance to shrieks of terror, while even the youths groaned, and the faces of all blanched, as they thought of the terrible fate that had overtaken Little Punn.

"He is gone!—for good and all, this time!"

"He won't escape this time!"

"No; it's all up with Little Punn!"

"He has gone to a horrible death!"

"Poor Little Punn!"

"Perhaps he may not have gone clear to the bottom of the crater," said Ben; "I will investigate," and he began making his way down the incline, in the same direction Little Punn had gone.

"Oh, Ben, do be careful!" cried Dorothy, in affright; "you will lose your life, the same as Little Punn has done!"

"... slow, old man!" cried Tom.

"Wait till we get a rope," called one of the guides; "then you will be in no danger at all."

"That's right; wait till he gets a rope," urged the youths, and the girls added their pleadings to that of the youth.

"Hurry, then," said Ben.

One of the guides produced a coil of rope from the car, and uncoiling it, threw the end down to Ben, who caught it deftly.

"All right!" he called back, as he tied the rope around his waist; "hold on to the rope."

"We will!" came back the reply from the youths, who had all seized hold of the rope—with the exception of Tom, who was making his way down the incline toward Ben.

"You had better stay up there, Tom," said Ben.

"No; where you go, there I will go!" was the determined reply. "The boys can hold us both from going over."

Tom was soon down beside Ben, and, acting on the latter's suggestion, he took his position in a secure place, and then Ben called up to the youths holding the rope to hold steady, as he was going to lean over the crater, and see if he could see anything of Little Punn.

The youths called back that they would hold him, and then Ben, placing his feet carefully, so as not to slip, leaned out over the crater. He instructed the youths to ease up on the rope a few inches at a time, until he was leaning at an angle of forty-five degrees.

"Oh, what if the rope should break!" breathed Dorothy. "Ben would go down to a horrible death!"

"The rope won't break, Dorothy," said Markham. "It is new and stout."

Ben could see down now, and he was amazed, as well as delighted, to see, floundering around in a great bed of ashes and lava dust, fifty feet below him, the form of Little Punn! The ashes and dust had collected in a sort of hollow basin ten or a dozen feet in diameter, and evidently about that deep, and Little Punn had fallen into the ashes and dust, and had not been killed. The stuff had broken the force of his fall. The little chap was in a bad fix, however, as he had doubtless plunged into the ashes and dust—which were light, like soot—several feet, and he was coughing and spluttering, and almost strangled. In fact, it was so evident that the little fellow was struggling to get his breath that Ben was frightened for fear he would not succeed; and then there was another danger: Little Punn in his efforts to get breath was staggering and tumbling about, and Ben was afraid he would fall out of the basin, and go down to sure death at the bottom of the crater.

"Be careful, Punny!" called Ben, in an anxious voice; "don't fall off the ledge! Stand as still as you can, and we will save you!"

Ben's voice seemed to bring the little chap to a realization of his situation, for he stopped staggering about, and stood for a few moments, still coughing and fighting to get his breath.

"Sit down, Punny!" called Ben, and the little chap obeyed, though he could not reply.

"You don't mean to say Little Punn is down there, and alive!" gasped Tom.

"Yes; he struck in a sort of basin forty or fifty feet down, and is alive—but in bad shape. The basin is filled with ashes and lava dust, and he has got his lungs filled up with it, and is having a hard time to get his breath. I think he is all right now, however."

"Little Punn is alive!" called Tom to the party of youths and girls, and they gave utterance to exclamations of thankfulness, and began discussing the wonderful escape from what had seemed as if it could not be otherwise than sure death.

"Have you got another rope up there?" called Ben.

"Yes," one of the guides replied; "I'll go up and get it."

"Do so, and as quickly as possible!" the youth urged. "I think we may be able to save Little Punn, if we hurry."

The guide went back up to the top of the cone and got another rope, and came back down with it.

"How long is the rope?" called Ben.

"Fifty or sixty feet," was the reply.

"I think that will be sufficient. Can you bring it down?"

The guide looked a bit dubious, but finally started, and brought the rope down to where Ben and Tom were. He came very slowly, however.

"That is the first time I was ever down here," he said; "and I think it will be the last."

Ben uncoiled the rope, and tying a knot in one end, lowered it down toward where Little Punn sat, fifty feet below, in the midst of the ashes and lava dust.

"How are you, Punny?" Ben asked. "Are you all right?"

"I guess so, Ben," came back in a hoarse, husky voice, which was followed by a fit of coughing.

"Good! Well, here comes a rope; can you tie it around your waist under your arms, Punny?"

"I guess so," came back the reply.

"All right; do so, and be careful to tie it good and tight!"

The end of the rope had reached the little chap now, and he took the rope, and bringing it around under his arms, he tied it securely.

"All ready, Ben!" he called.

"All right: up you come! Just let yourself hang quiet, Punny."

Ben began pulling the rope up, foot by foot, and Little Punn came with it. It was a difficult task to lift even a small youth as Little Punn such a distance. He

weighed about one hundred and twenty pound, and that is no little weight to pull up such a distance at the end of a rope.

Ben was equal to the task, however, and at last the little chap's head appeared above the edge of the crater.

"Great guns!" murmured Tom, in amazement, when he saw Little Punn's face. It was as black, almost, as that of a negro, and the little chap's eyes were red. He presented a sorry aspect.

"He fell in ashes and lava dust," the guide said. "That is what saved his life."

Slowly but surely up Little Punn came, and presently Ben seized him by the coat-collar, and lifting him, swung the little chap around and deposited him beside Tom and the guide.

"There you are, Punny, safe and sound," said Ben, in a tone of satisfaction.

"Glory! you don't know how glad I am to see you back up here alive and sound, Punny," said Tom.

"I'm alive, but it's as much as the bargain," said the little chap, in a husky voice. "Jove! I thought I was never going to be able to get my breath! I was all choked up with ashes and dust. I won't be able to talk like myself for a month!"

"Well, you are lucky to be alive," the guide said.

"I guess that's right," the youth agreed.

"Now let's be getting back up to where the rest of the folks are," said Ben, and the four made their way slowly and carefully up the incline, and presently reached the point where the rest were.

Wondering exclamations escaped all when they saw Little Punn, and although he presented an aspect that would have under ordinary circumstances provoked laughter, none of the members of the party felt like laughing at him now. They were too glad to see him among them once more, alive, to laugh.

"Say, I'll bet a hat I'm a pretty-looking blackbird!" the youth said, with an attempt at a laugh, but which ended in a fit of coughing.

"That's all right, Little Punn," said Ben. "We don't care how you look, just so we have you back with us again!"

"Thanks!" the little chap said, with an attempt at his usual airy manner; "I see that the girls have been crying. What do you think of that, Brownie?"

"Well, to tell the truth, we felt like crying, Little Punn!" said Mamie, earnestly. "I don't know what we should do without you to keep us cheered up!"

Even Brownie refrained, for once, from saying anything.

accident or cutting. The little chap's narrow escape from terrible death was of too recent date to permit of anything of that kind.

"Let us get back up out of this terrible place at once, Ben!" said Dorothy, with a shudder.

"I'm ready to go, I think," said Ben.

"And I!"

"Here, too!"

"I've seen as much of the crater of Vesuvius as I care to see!"

"And so have I!"

"But you haven't seen as much as I have," said Little Punn; "and I guess you don't want to."

"Not by a long chalk!"

The members of Ben's party were soon carried back to the top of the cone, and after a slight wait, they mounted the donkeys and started back down the mountain.

There was no water, so Little Punn had to wait till they reached the Hermitage before he could wash his face. It must have been very uncomfortable to have to wait nearly two hours before being able to get rid of the dirt and dust, but the little chap did not complain.

"If a fellow will dance, he oughtn't to complain at having to pay the fiddler," he said philosophically.

"That's right; your head is level, Little Punn," said Markham.

At the Hermitage they stopped an hour or more, and the first thing Little Punn did was to wash, and get himself back to his natural color once more—this being accomplished by quite a good deal of work.

CHAPTER VII.

IN RUINED POMPEII.

"There; do I look any better?" asked Little Punn, when he appeared before his companions, after having spent nearly a full hour on his toilet.

"You look almost as good as new, Punny," said Spalding.

"You are all right now, my boy!"

"Yes, you look like yourself again!"

"How do you feel, Punny?"

"Ready for another adventure, eh?"

"Well, there is one thing Little Punn can say, that no other living person can," said Markham; "and that is,

that he has fallen down into the crater of Vesuvius and come out again alive and well."

"That's right; no other person can say that."

"Little Punn is making a great record this trip," said Ben. "He has had several interesting adventures."

"I should say so!"

"I'm making too much of a record to suit me, Ben," the little chap said, with a comical air. "I believe I would rather leave the field clear for Brownie now. I don't aspire to anything further in the adventure line."

"Oh, Little Punn is very small,
But just the same there are none greater;
He certainly outdid them all—
He fell into Vesuvius' crater!"

murmured Rhyme.

"Yes, and I think the record will stand as the world's best record for a number of years," the little chap said.

"There is no doubt of that."

"That's right! there will not be many who will want to try to get that record away from you, Punny."

"They can have it for keeps, if they do get it," with a grin. "I shall never make an attempt to regain it."

Half an hour later the members of the party mounted the patient donkeys, and the descent was resumed, the hotel being reached at about five o'clock. All were tired, and were content to rest the balance of the afternoon and evening.

Next morning the party got ready, and went to view the ruins of Pompeii. They went by train, and found this a more pleasing way to travel than by riding donkeys.

The majority of the members of the party scarcely knew what they would see when they reached the ruins of Pompeii, and they were surprised when they found the great wilderness of roofless houses standing there.

"I didn't know they had got so much of the city opened up," said Markham.

"Nor did I," said Tom.

"Oh, they have been at work for a long time," said Ben; "and some time they expect to have it all opened up to the light of day."

"I didn't know they used brick in building houses in the olden times," said Rhyme.

"They did; and better brick than we have now, too," said Ben. "Look at the walls of these houses. They are as solid as they were eighteen hundred years ago, when the city was engulfed in ashes and cinders from Vesuvius."

"That's right," said Little Punn. "The masons who built those houses knew their business!"

Down into the narrow streets of the silent and deserted city went the little party, and much that was of interest was found. The streets were paved with lava block, which are almost as hard as iron, yet in these blocks ruts eight, ten inches, a foot deep are worn—cut there by the iron wheels of the chariots.

The members of the party made their way to where the judges used to mete out justice to the bad Pompeians—in the Forum of Justice—and then they wandered down the streets, and into and through the private mansions that had been occupied in the olden times by the rich and noble—by birth.

It was a strange and interesting experience to be wandering around in this deserted city, that had had no inhabitants since that terrible night in the year 79, A. D., when the great eruption of the volcano of Vesuvius took place, and the city was buried beneath a rain of ashes and cinders. It was so interesting that noon came almost before Ben and his companions were aware of it. They had brought a luncheon, however, and ate it in the Forum of Justice, seated on the seats that had in that long time ago held the noted judges of the city.

After resting a while, they started again, and wandered here and there at will. They had refused the offer of a guide to go with them and show them about, as they felt that they could get along without him, and not have to be bothered having him around.

They got along splendidly, until it was well along toward evening—the time having passed as fast as it had in the forenoon—and then they began to think of returning to the railway station.

"The last train for Naples leaves at six thirty, Ben," said Tom, consulting his watch; "and it is now a quarter to six. We had better be going, don't you think?"

"I guess we had, Tom," said Ben. "I think we have seen the most of the interesting things of ruined Pompeii, anyway."

"I should think so," said Dorothy: "we have seen enough, I should say."

"I am satisfied," said Mamie.

"And I," from Mildred.

"I'm ready to go back to Naples," said Markham.

"I, too; I'm getting hungry, and there was nothing left of the luncheon," said Little Punn.

"The fall down into the crater of Vesuvius didn't spoil your appetite, I notice," said Brown.

"Not a bit of it, Brownie; and I'm awfully glad of it,

too, for I don't know what I should do if I lost my appetite."

"Lead the way out, Ben," said Pinky Sweet.

"All right; come along, everybody," and Ben started in the direction which he thought led toward the Marine gate, which was the entrance through which they had come.

They moved along for a few minutes, expecting to reach the gate, but failed to do so.

"We must have been farther away from the entrance than I thought," said Ben. "I thought we would reach the gate easily in ten minutes."

"We must be nearly there," said Dorothy.

"Yes, it can't be much farther," said Mamie.

The little party walked onward, keeping a lookout for the gate, but another ten minutes passed, and still the gate was not in sight.

Ben paused, and looked about him in a puzzled manner.

"Are you lost, old man?" asked Tom.

"I don't know, Tom," Ben replied; "I thought I could find my way out of here easily, but I must admit that I am slightly puzzled. I was sure I was going in the right direction, but we should have reached the gate before this if that was the case."

"It looks as if we should have been at the entrance by this time," agreed Tom.

"Begorra, an' Oi tink we are afther bein' lost!" said Patsy Dooley.

"Oh, well, we will be able to find our way out soon," said Ben. "Come along, everybody."

"That guide will have the laugh on us, if he finds this out," said Little Punn.

"We won't tell him," smiled Ben.

The little party started again, and walked for ten or fifteen minutes longer, and still they failed to find the Marine gate, or, in fact, any gate or exit from the ruined city.

"We have only ten minutes longer in which to get out of here, if we are to catch the train, Ben," said Tom. "Do you think we will make it?"

"I don't know; we'll try, Tom, and again Ben set out followed by the rest.

It was now growing dusk, and things down in the ruined city began to have a rather gloomy and sombre appearance.

"I don't like this," said Dorothy, with a little shudder, and a glance around at the silent and deserted streets and roofless buildings.

"Nor I," said Mildred.

"I don't mind it," said Mamie, who rather liked strange and awe-inspiring experiences.

"You'd mind it if we got so tangled up we couldn't get out and had to stay here all night, Mamie," said Little Punn.

"Well, I must admit that I don't think I should enjoy that."

"It would be terrible," said Dorothy.

"It would not be pleasant, certainly," said Mildred.

"You had better let me take the lead, Ben," said Little Punn. "Whenever there is a difficultfeat to be performed, I Little Punn is the chap to perform it. I will wager that I can show you the way out of here inside of——"

"A week!" interpolated Brown.

"Oh, come, now; it wasn't your put in, Brownie," said the little chap.

"You think you know it all, Punny; but you are away off."

"Oh, well, I'm always that, to hear you tell it."

"Try again, Ben," said Tom; "perhaps we will make it next time."

Ben started again, and all followed, tramping along in rather a dejected fashion, for they were becoming tired and discouraged; and when after ten or fifteen minutes of walking they were still, seemingly, as far from the exit as they had been before, they paused and looked at each other in a blank manner.

"I guess we are in for it," said Pinky Sweet. "It begins to look as if we would have to spend the night here."

"So it does," acknowledged Tom. "What shall we do now, Ben?"

Ben looked nonplussed.

"I hardly know what to do," he replied. "I guess the only thing we can do is to keep on hunting for the outer gate. We will find it sooner or later."

"It'll be later," half groaned Little Punn. "We've missed the last train, and will have to walk back to Naples, if we do not succeed in finding our way out of this place."

"Lost in the ruined city of Pompeii! Wouldn't that jar you, though!" said Rhyme. "This is certainly an experience and a half!"

"Yes, or two-thirds!" murmured Little Punn. "I'll tell you the cause of this, Ben: It's because we have a Jonah along in the person of Brownie, here! We will have nothing but bad luck as long as he is a member of the party. I told you to leave him behind, or lose him somewhere!" "Oh, you talk too much!" growled Brown.

"We won't have to remain in here all night," said Ben,

more to reassure the girls, especially Dorothy, than otherwise. "We will strike the outer gate pretty soon."

"I hope so!" breathed Dorothy.

"And so do I!" from Mildred.

"What is bothering me," said Mamie, cheerfully, "is that I am, like Little Punn, getting hungry, and there is nothing to eat."

"Mamie and I are very similar in our tastes," said Little Punn, promptly; "I think we are just suited for each other."

"Crazy little ignoramus!" muttered Brown, wrathfully.

"Stop making remarks about yourself, Brownie," said Little Punn, calmly.

After resting a few minutes, and discussing the situation, pro and con, the party started onward again, Ben in the lead, and this time they succeeded in finding the gate.

Exclamations of pleasure and delight escaped 'all, and they hastened out of the ruined city into the street, and made their way toward the railway station.

"I don't expect to find that we will be able to get a train back to Naples this evening," said Ben; "but it may be possible, so we will go and see."

They went to the station and inquired of the man in charge, and he informed them that the last train had gone.

"I supposed we would find this to be the case," said Ben; "but now we know it, and will govern ourselves accordingly."

"That's right," agreed Tom.

As the party stood on the platform trying to think what they should do, the man who had wanted to be their guide through the ruined city came up.

"You missed the train?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Ben; "we got back to the station too late."

"Exactly; and you wish to return to Naples to-night?"

"Yes."

"Very good; I have a couple of carriages not far away, and will bring you back to Naples if you wish."

"Very good," said Ben, without showing any great eagerness; "what will be your charge?"

The fellow named a price, which was pretty steep, but Ben did not care to haggle with the man, so told him to bring his carriages at once.

"I will have them here within twenty minutes," the fellow said, and he hastened away.

"Well, this is luck!" said Tom. "We won't have to walk back to Naples after all."

"Say, I believe that fellow has an idea we got lost in the

ruins," said Little Punn. "I'll wager that it is a common occurrence."

"Well, if he suspected it, he didn't let on," said Rhyme.

"No; but I'll wager he is laughing in his sleeve!"

Whether or not the fellow suspected the truth was never known, for he gave no sign of suspecting anything of the kind, and of course none of the members of Ben's party said anything about it.

An hour later they were in their rooms at the hotel in Naples very well satisfied, on the whole, with the day's experiences, for they had enjoyed the ride home in the carriages more, perhaps, than they would have enjoyed the ride in the cars.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOING AS THE ROMANS DO.

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

"That is an old saying, but I don't know that it will be necessary for us to follow it out literally," said Markham, in response to the remark by Ben Bright.

"No, I guess not," smiling. "We will, however, follow their custom, in so far as it suits our fancy."

"Yes; we will eat plenty of good food—if we can get it—go out driving, go out to the theatres, and do as the better class of Romans do," said Little Punn; "but I don't care about going in rags, and doing without the necessities of life, as many of the poorer class do."

Ben Bright's around-the-world party was now at Rome. It had just arrived from Naples, and taken up its headquarters in the leading American hotel.

"Here is where we see a great deal that is interesting, eh, Ben?" remarked Markham.

"In Rome?—yes. I judge that there is more that is interesting in the history of that ancient time, seventeen or eighteen centuries ago, than can be found in any other one spot on earth."

"I think you are right about that," coincided Little Punn, who was pretty well posted in ancient history.

"What shall we see first?" asked Dorothy.

"Oh, it doesn't matter where we start," replied Ben. "I suppose we might as well go to St. Peter's first. There is much to see there, and we get a general view, I am told, from the summit of the dome that is very fine."

"To St. Peter's it is, then," said Little Punn.

"We will wait till after dinner before starting out,"

said Ben; "that will enable us to give the afternoon to St. Peter's, and that will not be too much time to give it, by any means."

"I second the motion to wait till after dinner," said Little Punn, who was always hungry.

At about one o'clock the party started out, and made its way to St. Peter's. When they came in sight of the immense cathedral, they stopped and looked at it for some time.

"That is a pretty fair-sized church, eh, fellows?" remarked Little Punn, finally.

"I should say it is, Punny!" said Rhyme.

"It is almost twice as large—though shaped differently—as the Capitol at Washington," said Ben.

"Phew! it is a large church, sure enough!" said Little Punn.

Then the little party moved forward and entered the building. Here they paused and stared about them in wondering amazement. They had never been in a building that was so large as this one. Standing under the monstrous dome it was easy to see that there was no church steeple in America that would come anywhere near reaching the top of the great opening.

"How many people do you suppose this would hold, Ben?" asked Dorothy.

"I could not say, Dorothy. I have read that as many as fifty thousand have assembled here at one time, and that there would be standing-room for three or four times that many. There is a story that ten thousand soldiers once came here to hear mass, and their commanding officer, who came later, thought they were not here. They were, however, being in one of the side rooms."

"That is a pretty big story, but I guess we will have to believe it," said Little Punn. "It looks as though an army could be hidden away in here."

In the exact centre of the church, beneath the dome, stands a sort of huge framework affair, called "baldacchino," and in a crypt underneath it repose the ashes of Peter, the Apostle.

Ben knew this, and imparted the information to the rest, and for once even Little Punn preserved perfect decorum of manner.

Then they went up into the dome and looked down into the huge room below. The immense size of this room could be better realized and appreciated from up here.

Then they went up to the extreme top of the dome, into what looked to be a small, gilt ball from down on the street, but which held thirteen and the guide without crowding

There were openings to look through, and a wonderful view was to be obtained from there.

"This is somewhat higher than the dome of the 'World' building in New York, isn't it?" asked Little Punn.

"Yes, indeed. We are now four hundred and thirty-eight feet above the earth, while the dome of the 'World' building is—I forget the number of feet now, but it isn't nearly so high."

"It doesn't matter; this is considerably higher, anyway, Ben," said Tom.

"I should think that nearly everything of interest in and about Rome could be seen from here," said Markham.

"That is the case," said the guide. And then he proceeded to point out the objects of interest.

"Yonder," he said, pointing, "is the Castle of St. Angelo."

"And is that river the Tiber?" asked Pinky Sweet.

"Yes; and that bridge you see yonder is the one which Horatius kept when Porsena attempted to cross with his army."

"What mountains are those, yonder?" asked Markham.

"Those are the Alban Mountains, and those still beyond are the Appenines, while those over there are the Sabin Hills."

"And that water we see yonder is the Mediterranean, I suppose?" queried Dorothy.

"Yes, miss."

"And what is that large, circular building—ruin, more properly speaking—yonder?" asked Pinky Sweet.

"That is the Coliseum."

"Oh, yes; that's the place where they used to fight and cut and slash each other to make a Roman holiday," said Little Punn. "They used to pitch Christians in there to the wild beasts, and considered it rare sport to watch the animals tear the Christians up into little bits. A nice lot, those Romans!"

"They were worse than the wild Indians of America," said Dorothy.

"We mustn't forget to go and take a look at the Coliseum before we leave Rome, Ben," said Tom.

"Oh, no; we can't afford to miss that."

"Do you see that building down there?" asked the guide, pointing downward at a building standing seemingly almost below them.

"Yes," was the reply.

"That is the building of the Inquisition."

There was much to see, and the little party remained up in the dome for an hour or more, and then went back down into the main room of the cathedral.

"Have you seen the pillars that came from Solomon's Temple?" the guide asked.

"No," Ben replied; "have they some of the pillars from the temple here?"

"Yes; they have twelve. Come; I will show you," and the guide led them to where the pillars were. Then he led them to where they could look upon a piece of wood that was a portion of the cross on which the Savior was crucified, and some of the nails used in making the cross, and a part of the crown of thorns. To say that these were interesting to look upon is stating it very mildly, and when they left St. Peter's and wended their way toward the Coliseum, they were one and all glad they had come to Rome, and that they had been in St. Peter's.

The guide they had had in the cathedral was such a pleasant, accommodating and unobtrusive fellow that Ben engaged him for the rest of the day, and the fellow went with them to the Coliseum.

"Everyone has seen a picture of the Coliseum, and knows what it looks like, but one cannot realize what an immense theatre it was until he has stood in the arena and looked about him," said Ben, as they stood in the enclosure and gazed upon the wonderful structure in amazement.

"That is a fact," said Tom. "It beats anything I ever imagined."

"Great guns!" said Little Punn; "there must have been a few people living in Rome in those days, to make it necessary to have such a large theatre."

"You are right, Punny," said Ben; "it is stated that Rome at that time had a population of at least four million people."

"Phew! that was as large as London is to-day, almost."

"Very nearly."

"I wonder how many spectators this theatre accommodated?" asked Dorothy.

"It is said that there were seats for eighty thousand people," said the guide; "and with the standing-room filled it is estimated that one hundred thousand persons witnessed each performance."

Ben and his friends spent an hour or more in the Coliseum, and they wondered what sort of a city Rome was when the people flocked to a show by the hundred thousand.

When they were through looking at the Coliseum it was getting along toward evening, and they returned to the hotel, and after a good supper and a rest of an hour or so, they got ready and went to the theatre.

The play was in Italian, of course, so they could not understand the text, but the Italians are so fluent of gesture that the members of Ben's party had not much diffi-

culty in interpreting the most of what was said and acted. Next morning, when the guide arrived at the hotel, the party set out for the Vatican, which is the residence of the Pope, and is one of the largest palaces in the world.

"What is there to see in the Vatican, Ben?" asked Little Punn.

"Oh, works of art of various kind, Punny. There are pictures and sculptures, rare books, and everything of that kind."

"Ah, I see."

They were soon at the Vatican, and started in to see everything in a systematic manner. The guide was more than ordinarily intelligent, and he seemed to have taken a liking to Ben and the members of his party, and fairly out-did himself in his efforts to show everything of interest.

Little Punn slyly joked Mamie, telling her that the guide had fallen in love with her, but he did not make much off the jolly girl, who could take and give jokes with the best of them.

"You will have a chance to see something worth while this afternoon," said the guide, as they were moving about looking at first one thing, then another.

"What will it be?" asked Ben.

"There is going to be a big parade."

"A big parade, eh?"

"Yes. It will be headed by King Humbert in a carriage, and opposite the Vatican he will stop and review the parade as it passes."

"Say, that will be immense!" said Little Punn. "And we will get to see a real, live king!"

"Yes, you will get to see a real, live king," said Brown; "and I would advise you, Punny, to be on your good behavior this afternoon. If you try any funny business, you will land in the lock-up."

"Don't you be afraid, Brownie!"

The girls were greatly excited, and interested as well, and Mamie asked:

"Will the queen be with the king in the carriage?"

"Oh, yes, miss," was the reply.

"I'm glad of that. I want to see a real queen."

"So do I wish to see one," said Dorothy: "not that I think she is better than anybody else, but I have a curiosity to see one, that is all."

"It is the same with me," said Mildred.

"I have a curiosity to see a real, live queen, too," said Ben; "but I am satisfied in my own mind that there are no queens to compare with our own American queens."

"Isn't it nice of Ben to say that?" said Mamie.

"Indeed it is," from Dorothy.

"I think so," declared Mildred.

"Oh, Ben is coming on," said Little Punn, airily; "if he remains in my company a few years more he will be quite a gallant youth!"

"Egotistical little runt!" murmured Brown.

"I'd rather be egotistical than a faindy-calf like you!" retorted Little Punn.

"Let's go to the hotel early, so as to have an early dinner," said Mamie. "We don't want to miss that parade!"

"That is what we will do, Mamie," said Little Punn. "You shan't miss the parade, if I have to go out and throw things in the way of the king's carriage so it can't move."

The party returned to the hotel at eleven, and as soon as they had made their toilet all went down to the dining room and had an early dinner.

At a quarter to one o'clock, they were out in the street, and had chosen a place of vantage, not far from the Vatican, from whence they would be able to get a good view of the parade. They were early, but there were hundreds and thousands of people gathered along the line of the parade, and if they had not gotten there early they would have been unable to get a good position.

"Let the parade start now; I am here!" said Little Punn.

"Oh, it will start at once!" sneered Brown. "That is all it has been waiting for!"

They had been in position perhaps half an hour before the head of the parade came in sight. A band came first, the players walking, and it made fine music.

There was great excitement among the thousands of spectators, and more noise, in the way of shouting and cheering, was heard than would have been heard in America under like conditions at a dozen parades.

"These Italians are excitable people, aren't they?" said Little Punn.

"Yes; they are great for noise and gesticulation," said Rhyme.

"There comes the king's carriage!" cried Mamie. "And, yes, the queen is in it!"

"So she is!" said Dorothy, and the three girls watched the approaching carriage and its occupants closely.

"I see a king!—a real, live king!" said Little Punn; "but he looks just like the rest of the men! I thought he would look different in some way!"

"He is only a common man, like the rest, Punny," said Markham.

The carriage was almost even with where Ben and his friends were now. The king was bowing right and left, and waving his hands and smiling pleasantly, but at the

moment when the carriage was even with Ben's party the smile suddenly left the king's face, to be succeeded by a look of horror, for suddenly a wild-eyed, fierce-looking man—an Italian, evidently—leaped forward out of the crowd, flourishing a revolver, and before a hand could be lifted to prevent it, he leveled the weapon and fired a shot point blank at the king!

A great cry of rage and horror went up from the crowd, and on the air rose the words:

"An anarchist! He has shot the king!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE KING AND QUEEN.

For some reason the people standing near the spot seemed afraid to take hold of the man with the revolver, and he would have continued firing at the king, had it not been for Ben Bright. The anarchist had leaped forward from almost in front of Ben, and this left an opening, through which the youth leaped with the bound of a tiger, and before the fellow could fire a second shot, Ben had seized him by the wrists, and was struggling with the would-be assassin.

The fellow was very strong—rendered doubly so, probably, by desperation, and strong as Ben was, it was all he could do to hold the fellow's arms, and keep him from firing more shots at the king.

He was not left to struggle alone with the fellow, however, for Tom leaped forward and seized the anarchist, and between them they soon had him disarmed and powerless.

Meanwhile the wildest excitement reigned. The parade came to a stop, and while dozens of the nobles and friends of the king rushed forward to the carriage of the king to see how badly hurt he was, scores of the people crowded around the anarchist, crying out something in Italian, and making threatening demonstrations. Of course, Ben and his friends could not understand what was said, but they shrewdly guessed that the people were crying:

"Kill him! Kill him! Kill the anarchist!"

The king was not injured. The anarchist, in his excitement, had missed, although not five feet away when he fired, and when he saw that the king was uninjured, a wild cry of rage and despair escaped him.

He had made a failure of his attempt at killing the king, and this was what made the fellow feel so bad, without a doubt. Had he succeeded in killing or seriously wounding the king, he would not have cared so much.

The king now took note of the situation of the anarchist, and of the threatening attitude of the people, and rising to his feet in the carriage, made a short speech to the crowd, which had the effect of calming it down. Then some Italian officers came and took the anarchist, handcuffing him, and one who could speak English, after speaking to Ben in Italian, and noting that the youth did not understand, said in English:

"The king wishes to see you. He would thank you for what you have done."

"We don't want any thanks," said Ben, holding back. "It is all right."

"Oh, but you must not refuse to see him," the officer said; "come!" and taking Ben and Tom by the arm he led them forward, and bowing low, said something in Italian, and withdrew.

"So you are Americans," the king said, smiling. "I like the Americans! They are a brave and magnanimous race, and I wish to thank you for your prompt action just now, which probably saved my life," and the king extended his hand, which first Ben and then Tom accepted.

"Great guns! what luck!" murmured Little Punn; "they are shaking hands with a real, live king!"

"They are lucky, sure enough," said Mamie. "I wish we could get to shake hands with the queen!"

"Let's step forward, and get in on the strength of being the companions of Ben and Tom," said Little Punn, who was nothing if not nervy.

"Oh, that would be too brassy, Little Punn," said Mamie, hesitatingly.

"No, it wouldn't. Come along; I'll lead the way!"

Little Punn strode boldly forward, but the rest did not follow. He reached the carriage just after the youths had been introduced to the queen, they having given their names, and Little Punn reached out his hand to King Humbert and, with the coolest air imaginable, said:

"How are you, King Humbert? I'm a friend of these two young gentlemen who captured the anarchist, and I congratulate you on your escape from death at his hands!"

"Thank you," said the king, smiling, and shaking the little chap's hand heartily. "I am glad to know any friend of theirs. What did you say your name was?"

"A. Little Punn."

Then the king introduced Little Punn to the queen, and he was so emboldened by his success that he said:

"And now, your Majesty, we have some more friends whom we would like to present, if agreeable to you."

"We are a party of Americans on a trip around the world," explained Ben.

"I shall be glad to meet your friends, Mr. Bright," the king said, and Ben beckoned to his companions, who stepped forward.

Ben presented Dorothy, Mamie and Mildred first, and the wonderful beauty of the three girls made an evident impression on the king and queen. Then the youths were presented, and Ben bowed and said:

"We will detain you no longer. We are glad to have been of service to you, and have had the opportunity of meeting you."

"But this must not end it," the king said.

"No, indeed," said the queen, who could speak good English, also.

"We are giving a reception at the palace, this evening," the king said, "and you must all come. We throw formality to the winds, and herewith invite you one and all, and insist that you honor us with your presence. Is not that right?" to his wife.

"Quite right," the lady said. "We will not take no for an answer. You must come!"

"Very well; since you insist," said Ben.

Then they bowed and drew back into the crowd, and with a wave of the hand the king gave the order for the parade to proceed.

The parade started, and the king and queen both turned and looked back at Ben and his friends, and waved their hands and smiled, all the members of Ben's party waving in reply.

"Hob-nobbing with kings and queens," said Little Punn, thrusting his thumbs in the armholes of his vest and elevating his head till his nose stuck almost straight in the air. "Say, we are all right! We are right in it! We are the people!"

"You are all right, Little Punn; we have been very fortunate this afternoon," said Mamie.

"And, as usual, we owe it all to Ben," said Tom.

"That's right!" agreed Markham.

"Yes," said Dorothy; "if he had not leaped forward and caught and held the anarchist, we would not have got the chance of meeting the king and queen."

"You must give me some credit in this affair," said Little Punn. "If I had not gone forward and introduced myself to the king, and told him about the rest of you, I don't believe you would have got to meet the king and queen, for Ben is one of those fellows who do not believe in pushing himself or his friends upon any one, and he would not have had the impudence to ask to let you be presented, see?"

"Impudence is the correct word!" said Brown.

"We are much obliged to you, Little Punn," said Mamie, "though I think you are claiming a little more than your share of credit."

"Of course he is," said Brown. "He always does that."

"Well, if you want credit for what you really do do," said Little Punn, calmly and philosophically, "you must claim credit for two or three times as much as you are entitled to. It is the only way."

"What a philosopher the little runt is, anyway," said Markham.

"Oh, I learn a few things as I travel down the sandbanks of Time!"

"Very few!" sneered Brown.

"Beats none at all, as is the case with you, Brownie!"

Ben and his friends were the observed of all observers, and those standing in the vicinity looked at the Americans more than they looked at the parade. The wonderful beauty of the three girls was partly responsible, for it was not often that three such wonderfully beautiful girls could be seen together.

"It is me they are looking at, mostly!" said Little Punn, with an important air. "It is not often they get a chance to see such an impressive-appearing fellow as yours truly, A. Little Punn!"

"Oh, that bumps one worse than a corduroy road!" said Brown.

"I'll bet a hat you never saw a corduroy road," said Little Punn.

The members of Ben's party stood there watching the parade until it was passed, and then they turned away and moved down the street, going in the direction of the hotel. They did not notice it, but a couple of villainous-looking Italians followed them, keeping a short distance behind the party. It was not a difficult matter to follow without being in danger of being detected, as there were many people on the street.

The two Italians followed Ben and his companions till the hotel was reached, and then, having learned all they wished to, doubtless, the two withdrew, going back in the direction they had come from.

To say that Ben and his friends were not somewhat excited by the prospect of attending a reception to be given by the King and Queen of Italy, would be saying what is not true. They were somewhat excited, the girls most of all; and Little Punn the least, apparently, of any.

"Goodness! what will we wear to-night?" asked Dorothy of the other girls, and, indeed, the question of dress was bothering the youths as well. They had their dress suits along with them, however, and they decided that the

would do very nicely. The girls had several nice dresses, which they thought would be suitable, and the question of dress was finally settled satisfactorily to all concerned.

"Oh, we'll make as good a showing as any of them," said Little Punn, confidently. "They won't hold over us any. We are all right."

"I think we will pas," said Ben, with a smile.

"Sure! I'll wager a whole lot that there won't be three as beautiful women there as our girls, and then you all know that there will be no men there half so good looking as I am!"

"The first part of that is all right, Punny," said Markham; "but the last part is——"

"Enough to jar a person!" from Brown.

"Yes, if Punny is better looking than the men who will be at the reception, I pity them, that is all!" said Rhyme.

"You and Brownie are both jealous of me on account of my good looks," the little chap declared. "You just wait and see if I don't cut a swell there to-night."

"Oh, there is no doubt but what you will make your presence known," said Brown. "You will be chinning the queen as if you had known her all your life!"

"Of course; why not? I don't believe in being backward. Fortune favors the brave, and I'm not going to be timid, not if I know myself, and I think I do!"

"You mustn't get too fresh, Punny," drawled Spalding; "you must remember that these Italians are hot-blooded, and you are liable to be challenged to a duel."

"I don't think there is much danger, Spaldy. I am too dangerous-looking! They would be afraid of me!"

This remark of the little chap was greeted with laughter, and he put on an injured expression.

"That's all right," he said; "laugh if you want to, You fellows are jealous of me. That's what ails you!"

"Of course it is, Little Punn," said Mamie, who complimented and made sport of the chap alternately.

"There! what did I tell you?" triumphantly; "Mamie knows what is what, you bet!"

"Bah! she is making game of you, and you haven't sense enough to know it!" said Brown.

"Don't you believe she is! She means every word she says!"

It was decided not to go out again that afternoon to see more sights, the girls especially desiring to remain indoors and rest up for the reception at the palace of the king and queen.

At about seven o'clock the carriages which Ben had ordered for the occasion drew up in front of the hotel, and the members of the party went down and got in the carriages,

and were driven to the Quirinal, which is the name the king's palace bears.

Ben and his friends were greeted very pleasantly by the king and queen, and were introduced to nobles without number. The majority of those present could speak English, and so all were enabled to converse together.

The girls were the bright, particular stars of the occasion, and were surrounded almost constantly by a great crowd of the leading nobles of the city. Some of the Italian ladies looked glum and frowning. They did not fancy having the fair-faced American girls come in and attract their admirers away from them.

"Your young ladies are creating something of a sensation," said the queen, addressing Ben.

"It seems so," he replied, with a smile. "I guess it is because your gentlemen wish to show every courtesy to strangers in a strange land."

The queen smiled.

"The young ladies are very beautiful," she said. "That is what is attracting the gentlemen. You men are all alike; you admire beautiful women."

"Is it not natural that we should admire the ladies?" inquired Ben; "our mothers were women, you know."

"True. It is right that it should be so, Mr. Bright."

Tom wore a gloomy face, however.

"What is the matter, old man?" asked Ben, in an aside, he having noticed that something ailed his chum.

"Oh, nothing."

"I know better. What is it?"

"Oh, it is nothing, Ben; nothing at all, only—I don't like the way those crazy little Italians swarm around the girls."

"It was out now, and Ben could hardly keep from smiling. He kept a straight face, however, and running his arm through that of his chum, walked away to one side with him.

"That is all right, Tom," he said; "those fellows are merely gallants, and are simply trying to be polite. The girls are merely amusing themselves; and, as for the girls, you needn't be afraid that they will fall in love with any of the fellows."

"I don't like the fellows," said Tom. "They are not my style at all."

"Nor mine, Tom; but it is all right. They are merely trying to help make this an enjoyable evening for the girls."

Tom couldn't look at it philosophically, and his face was pretty sombre, but he managed to keep from saying anything saucy or cutting to the fellows.

A fine orchestra was in one of the rooms, and presently dancing was begun, and the youths and the girls made their way into the ballroom. Soon all were dancing, with the exception of three or four of the youths who did not dance, and things went pleasantly and joyously on.

Ben, Tom, the girls and a number of the youths were good dancers, and were able to keep their ends up with the best of the nobles tripping the light fantastic about them, and they enjoyed themselves very much—with the possible exception of Tom.

“Say, Ben, how does this compare with Arkansaw?” asked Little Punn, who was in his element, and had been swinging one of the ladies of the nobility with an energy to which she was unaccustomed, but which she had seemed to enjoy.

“Well, it is slightly different, Punny,” with a smile.

“Yes; they put on more frills here, but there isn’t any more fun going around.”

“No; I suppose not. You seemed to be enjoying yourself, however.”

“How are you enjoying yourself, Dorothy?” asked Ben, a few minutes later, when he got an opportunity to speak to her.

“Oh, very well, Ben,” was the reply; “those men are very tiresome, however. They do nothing but say complimentary things, and that is, to my mind, very bad breeding. It is almost insulting; for it is as much as to say that they think that is all a girl cares for.”

“It is the way they are accustomed to doing with their own ladies, Dorothy, and they think all women are alike, and that it would be impossible to say too many complimentary things to any woman.”

“Well, they are mistaken. American girls don’t care to hear that kind of talk all the time.”

Mamie came up just then, and a moment later Tom appeared, and Ben and Tom claimed the girls for a waltz. During the waltz Tom’s face actually cleared, and Ben whispered to Dorothy, and told her what Tom had to say regarding the Italian gallants, and told her to look at the youth’s face now, as compared to what it was before.

“Tom is quick-tempered, and somewhat inclined to be jealous,” Dorothy said; “but he is a splendid fellow, and as good-hearted as anyone could possibly be.”

“Yes, indeed! Tom is a chum worth having, Dorothy! He is as true as steel, and has a heart of gold.”

Patsy Dooley, Dan Denny, Brown and Pinky Sweet did not dance, so were forced to stand at one side and watch the rest enjoy themselves. Patsy said afterward, however,

that it was “more fun than a surkiss to see them ~~Eye~~ all-yuns a-hoppin’ around loike jumpin'-jhacks, begorra!”

When the dancing was ended, all went into an immense dining room, and sat down to a repast such as Ben nor any of his companions had ever seen. Patsy and Dan Denny were somewhat awed, but Ben and the rest did very nicely, and none of those present would have suspected that it was the first time they had ever sat at the table of a king.

It was a feast long to be remembered, and King Humbert, with the art of a genuine host, got up and made a little speech, detailing the incident of the saving of his life by Ben and Tom, and ended by giving a toast to the brave American youths and beautiful American ladies, and to say that the toast was received with enthusiasm is stating it mildly, for the majority of the nobles seated at the table were wildly in love with the three beautiful girls, and would have drunk toasts to them as long as they could sit at the table.

Someone called upon Ben for a speech, and King Humbert insisted that the youth favor them. Ben demurred, and said he was no speaker, but they would listen to nothing else, and “Speech! Speech!” was all that could be heard from one end of the dining room to the other.

“Go ahead and make a speech, Ben,” said Tom.

“Yes, do,” urged Dorothy.

So Ben consented, and got up and made a speech that set the listeners applauding presently. Ben could make a pretty good speech when he tried, and he did his best on this occasion, making a speech that pleased all, and he was applauded vigorously when he finished.

“You did that splendidly, Ben,” said Little Punn, under cover of the noise of the applauding. “I really believe that I couldn’t have done much better myself!”

The reception lasted an hour or more after supper was ended, and the time was spent in informal talk. When the visitors began leaving, Ben and his friends got ready to go, as they did not wish to be the last to leave. They bade their host and hostess good-night, and thanked them for a pleasant evening, and just as they were about to start, the king said:

“By the way, Mr. Bright, how long will you be in Rome?”

“I could hardly say,” the youth replied. “We will be here several days longer, I suppose.”

“Very well; I am glad to hear that. We have our annual flower carival and parade day after to-morrow, and I would be pleased to have you remain and take part. If you will agree to do so, I will send a couple of carriages

"You, and you shall have the place of honor, immediately to the royal carriage. What do you say?"

A glance at the eager faces of the girls told Ben that they wished him to accept the invitation, and he said:

"Very well, I accept your kind invitation, King Humbert, and thank you. At what hour shall we be ready?"

"At one o'clock."

"Very well: we will be ready."

Then they left the palae, and made their way to the entrance, their carriages having been ordered by the footman. When the carriages were driven up to the entrance Ben made a diseovery: The drivers who were now on the seats were not the men who had oceupied the drivers' seats when they came to the palaec! The horses and carriages were the same, but the men on the drivers' seats were not. For some reason the men who had driven the earriages to the palace had disappeared, and two new ones had taken their placees.

Ben's mind was aetive, and the thought struck him that this might mean danger to himself and friends. He could not think why it should, but he was suspicious, and he did not feel like entering the carriages until after he had investigated matters.

"Wait a moment," he said to his eompanions; "don't enter the carriages just yet." Then he addressed the driver of the first carriage.

"Where is the man who drove us here?" he asked, in a somewhat stern tone.

"What do you mean?" the driver asked; "I drove you here."

He was trying to run a bluff.

But he was going against a youth from the country that originated the game of "bluff," and his bluff did not go.

"You are mistaken, my friend," said Ben, coldly; "you are not the man who drove this carriage here, nor is the man on yonder seat the man who drove that earriage here."

The other youths were catching on now, and Tom exclaimed, exeitedly:

"You are right, Ben! They are not the same men!"

"What does it mean?" exelaimed Dorothy.

A curse escaped the lips of the man Ben had been talking to, and reaching in his pocket quickly, he drew a revolver and attempted to level it and fire at the youth. Ben was too quick for him, however, and leaping forward caught him by the wrist, and gave it such a terrible twist that the fellow uttered a cry of pain and let the weapon fall to the ground. Then Ben jerked the fellow down off the seat, and seizing him by both arms, held him securely, despite

his struggles. The other pseudo-driver, seeing that his companion had gotten into trouble, and knowing he would do so if he remained, leaped down from the seat and ran away as rapidly as he could.

The episode had attracted the attention of a number of those who were preparing to start home, and soon the news that an attempt had been made against the life of the young American, Ben Bright, was known throughout the palae, and the king and queen came out to the entrance. They were greatly exeited, and were pleased when they found that no one had been hurt, and that the would-be assailant had been eaptured.

"They are anarchists, without a doubt," said the king, when he had heard the story of the triek that had been played. "They hired the other drivers to let them take their placees; I am sure of it. Wait, some of the deetetives will be here in a few moments, and I anticipate that they will recognize this scoundrel as being one of Rome's well-known anarehists."

"Your majesty is right," said a voice at his elbow, and a man in uniform stepped forward and looked at the fellow Ben was holding. "This is Antonius Bressius, one of the ringleaders of the anarehists of Rome, and a very dangerous fellow he is, too!"

Then he handeuffed the fellow, who attempted to struggle and prevent it, but to no avail, as Ben held him securely.

"Why, do you suppose, did they attempt to play this trick on myself and friends?" asked Ben.

"It is very simple," said King Humbert; "you saved my life this afternoon, and caused the capture and arrest of one of the leading anarchists, and they wanted revenge on you. They would have killed you, sure."

"This is terrible!" breathed Dorothy. "Goodness, Ben!" Let us leave Rome at once! I am afraid you will be murdered!"

"I don't think they will try it again, Miss Dare," said the king. "It will be best to exereise considerable care while here, however. Do not needlessly expose yourselves."

"I shall take eare of myself," said Ben.

"How will we get baek to the hotel?" asked Mamie; "we have no drivers."

"You shall have a couple of my eoaehmen," said the king, and he gave some instruotions to one of his servants, who hastened away.

Ten minutes later a couple of coachmen appeared, and took their places on the drivers' seats of the carriages. Then, bidding the king and queen good-night, all got in the earriages, and were driven to the hotel.

Ben and his friends spent the next day in looking at

some more of the interesting sights of Rome, but on the next day—which was the day of the flower carnival and parade, they took it easy, and did not leave the hotel.

The girls were very much excited, and spent nearly the whole of the forenoon in dressing and getting ready for the ride which they were to take in the royal carriage that afternoon, and even the youths did not seem wholly indifferent.

They had an early dinner, and when the carriages arrived at one o'clock all got in—there were three carriages—and were driven to the palace of the king.

The king and queen were ready to enter their carriage, and did so immediately after greeting Ben and his friends.

There were a couple of fine saddle horses there, which were intended for the use of the American youths if the carriages were too crowded, and Ben and Tom mounted the horses.

Then the king's carriage rolled away, followed by the three containing the Americans, and Ben and Tom kept alongside the carriage in which were the girls.

The parade had already formed, and was awaiting the coming of the king's carriage, and when the four carriages had taken their places the parade started. First was a splendid band, next the king and queen in the royal carriage, then the girls in another of the royal carriages, Ben and Tom riding beside it, and then the other two royal carriages with the youths in them. It was a great parade, The king and queen were cheered, of course, and so were Ben, Tom and the girls, and the crowd went wild.

As I have said, the girls rode in a carriage, while Ben Bright and Tom True, on horseback, rode on either side, and attracted a great deal of admiring attention and comment. All along the route they were showered with flowers. Little Punn was in his element, and sat up as erect as a drum major, and kept lifting his hat to the crowds, his face as grave and solemn as a judge, and the other youths could not keep their faces straight.

"Say, just see how wild the people are over me!" the little corporal said. "That proves that the people are possessed of splendid judgment and good taste!"

"Oh, you make me weary, Punny!" growled Brown; "they are not even looking at you. They are looking at the king and queen, and at Ben and Tom and the girls."

"That's you, up and down, Brownie!" said Little Punn, shaking his head sadly. "You are never willing to give me credit for anything. You know very well that the most of those cheers are for me!" and then the little chap rose to his feet, hat in hand, and bowed, first toward one side and then the other; but just at this moment the parade got blocked in some manner, and the carriage came to a sudden stop, throwing Little Punn back against the driver's seat with considerable force, causing the crowd to yell with delight.

"There! What did I tell you?" said Little Punn. "They are cheering me, and no one else!"

"Yes; after the same fashion that people cheer and laugh at a circus clown!" sneered Brown.

"Well, we can say that we have been in a parade in Italy, and have shared honors with the king and queen, Ben," said Dorothy that evening, as they sat in the parlor talking of the events of the day.

"Yes, indeed," said Ben.

"It is just this way, Ben," said Little Punn; "we are in Rome, and have been 'Doing as the Romans Do!'"

THE END.

The next number (60) of "Three Chums" will contain "THREE CHUMS IN GREECE; OR, TAKING PART IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES," by Harry Moore.

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